MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

47744
JUNE
75¢

TIMETABLE FOR TERROR

The New **MIKE SHAYNE** Short Novel
by **BRETT HALLIDAY**

BOOK OF SHADOWS

A **"Different"** Story
by **GEORGE C. CHESBRO**

THE DEVIL AND CARLO GAMBINO

Exciting New
TRUE CRIME
Masterpiece
by **DAVID MAZROFF**

24 ISSUES FOR ONLY $14

For a Two Year Subscription To:

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

MIKE SHAYNE has given his name to one of the truly fine mystery-crime-detective magazines being published today. And it is the only magazine in the United States that publishes a *new* Mike Shayne story in every issue. Mike Shayne, or rather Brett Halliday, his creator, has given more than his name. Every page is finger-printed with quality—for Mike Shayne's twin standards are good writing and good stories. And MSMM has always been crowded with the finest stories, by the finest writers practising their murderous craft today. For those readers who find it difficult purchasing the magazine on their local newsstands, we suggest that you fill in the handy coupon printed below and subscribe today—assuring yourself of a visit from Mike Shayne, and his colleagues and their enemies—every month for two years—or twenty-four consecutive issues. It's a two-year term of the best in modern crime fiction.

SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . RE-SUBSCRIBE NOW . . . for the biggest bargain of your crime-reading life. Two years—24 issues—remember, we still are *only* 75¢ an issue—yours for just $14.00, in United States currency, please. Kindly remit an additional two dollars for Canada, Mexico, Pan American countries and all foreign countries.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
8230 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90048

Kindly enter my subscription to MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE for two years (24 issues) @ $14.00. Add $2.00 for foreign postage.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print **JUNE-301**

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

JUNE, 1975
VOL. 36, NO. 6

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

TIMETABLE FOR TERROR

by BRETT HALLIDAY

The quadrupal kidnaping went off like clockwork—one, two, three four, all in a row. Two girls, two boys, all offspring of minor Miami officials. The problem the police faced was a great big why—until the bill came—one million dollars in Miami municipal funds to be paid by the mayor in person. It looked like a perfect crime—and would have been if the kidnapers had not made the mistake of unloading their victims' bodies on Shayne.

. . . . . 2 to 47

NEW TRUE CRIME FEATURE
THE DEVIL AND CARLO GAMBINO
DAVID MAZROFF 56

A "DIFFERENT" STORY
BOOK OF SHADOWS
GEORGE C. CHESBRO 104

EXCITING NEW STORIES
THE INCESSANT VOICE
ELEANOR ROBINS 52

A RECORD OF GUILT
JAMES McKIMMEY 79

THE DOUBLE-BREASTED COAT
HERBERT HARRIS 87

SURE THING
MICHAEL BRETT 93

LACK OF COMMUNICATIONS
MERLE AHERN 126

LEO MARGULIES
Publisher

CYLVIA KLEINMAN
Managing Editor

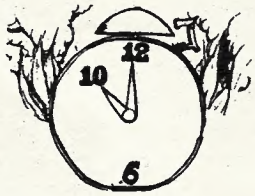
LAURIE ROSE
Subscriptions

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Vol. 36, No. 6, June, 1975. Published monthly by Renown Publications, Inc., 8230 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90048. Subscriptions, One Year (12 issues) $9.00; Two Years (24 issues) $18.00; single copies 75¢. Second-class postage paid at Los Angeles, Cal., and at additional mailing offices. Places and characters in this magazine are wholly fictitious. © 1975 by Renown Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the International and Pan-American copyright conventions. Printed in the United States of America. Postmaster—return 3579 to 8230 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90048.

TIMETABLE FOR TERROR

by BRETT HALLIDAY

It ran like clockwork. The first body was left on the hood of Mike Shayne's car. The second came addressed to the detective. But no one knew where the other two kidnap victims were — nor how they would be returned!



THE LONE THIEF bolted from the self-opening door as Michael Shayne curved from the sidewalk to enter the bank. The robber was hooded. He carried a gun in his right hand and a brown paper bag in his left. He crashed into the Miami private detective's shoulder, yelped and spun off.

Shayne was off balance. He pitched toward the curbing, slammed palms against the fender of a parked car.

He whipped around to see the robber dodging and dancing be-

©, *1975 by Brett Halliday*

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

The New MIKE SHAYNE Short NOVEL

tween pedestrians in a weaving pattern along the sidewalk. A bank guard raced out of the door of the tall building, leveling a service revolver. There were screams of surprise and instant terror, hoarse shouts. The pedestrians split as if divided by a giant knife.

But the bank guard had a second thought. He did not fire the weapon.

Shayne moved out in a long-legged run, bulling and spinning and darting as the pedestrians moved back in on him like the receding of a tremendous wave. He no longer could see the robber, but his eyes picked up the split of the sidewalk crowd far ahead. Then suddenly there was no more division of pedestrians and the redhead knew his quarry had left the street.

Shayne puffed up to an alley entrance, saw the stares from the curious facing down the alley. He entered the alley. There was no one in sight, only the garbage cans and the litter. Near the opposite end of the block, a car was parked against one of the alley walls.

Shayne looked up. No climbers. He searched the opposite end of the alley. Walkers moved back and forth across the opening without breaking stride.

So his man was still in the alley somewhere, hunched, waiting. He could have a gun leveled on the detective's middle in this instant, eyes squeezed down, muscles taut, trigger finger tensed. He could be waiting for one more step from the detective, just one more . . .

Mike Shayne knew he was a huge target.

He heard police sirens in the distance. The sound of the sirens was sweeping in fast.

He moved in behind a dented garbage can, squatted, then yanked out the .45. The movement should have triggered reaction from the robber. It didn't.

Shayne sweated as he searched the shade of the macadam cavern. Had the robber found a hole in the alley and dived in? A door in one of the walls that formed the alley! That had to be it. Perhaps the escape route had been planned, a door left unlocked for a reason.

The robber could be inside one of the buildings, going up to a roof. Or he could be ridding himself of the hood, the paper sack, transferring the money to a legitimate-looking airline bag. In just a few seconds, he could be going out a front door of the building and blending into the sidewalk crowd, striding along with the

noon walkers, moving just like anyone else with intent and destination on a short noon hour break.

Shayne left the meager protection of the garbage can and moved deeper into the alley, large jaw thrust, gray eyes searching every cranny, the gun ready in his hand. He tried a couple of doors. They were locked. He moved in behind the parked car, looked back down the alley.

All the redhead saw was the cluster of curious, pedestrians, still packed in the alley entrance, still watching.

No one had gone out that way. There would have been shouts, shrieks.

Shayne moved cautiously along the side of the parked sedan, and glanced inside. He froze. The man was on the floor of the rear seat, face down and hunched slightly, arms covering his hooded head as if he were warding off imaginary blows, the paper bag stuffed into a corner beside his elbow.

Shayne yanked open the car door and stepped on the man's gun wrist. The man yelped and squirmed, but made no effort to lift his head. Rather, he seemed to be attempting to snake out of sight into a non-existent hole.

Shayne stared at the gun in the man's hand. The gun looked like it had come from a grave. It was rusty and moldy and stiff.

The detective holstered his .45 and jerked the rusty gun from the man's hand, and pitched it on the car seat. The gun hadn't been fired in years, and was probably inoperable. Shayne caught clothing at the man's shoulders and jerked him out of the car. The face was screwed up in fright, the eyes held a gleam of terror. The man attempted to lift his hands.

Shayne knelt on one knee and clutched the man's shirt front, jerked him into a sitting position.

The man babbled, "D-d-don't shoot me, officer."

Shayne sighed, stood. "Come on, pal. On your feet."

The man cowered. "I was — desperate. I ain't got a job. I'm hungry."

Shayne grabbed the paper bag, looked inside. There were a few one dollar bills. Nothing more.

"It-it's all the woman gave me," the man babbled. "Honest — officer. I didn't lose none of it running."

Shayne almost felt like giving the guy fifty bucks and telling him to scramble. The guy would be ahead.

Novices!

The detective snorted.

II

DONALD VARGA was a novice at this kind of game, and he was nervous. He gripped the steering wheel of the parked panel truck tightly as he stared across the intersection. Fingers worked, perspiration filmed his dusky skin.

Beside him, the girl glanced at the cheap silver watch on her wrist. "It's five o'clock, doll," she said, tone flat. "Time."

"She'll be along," Varga said in a voice that broke. "I've timed her four Tuesdays in a row. Five to five-fifteen, that's when she hits this corner. We've got—"

Varga stiffened. "There she is!"

The girl who had appeared on the sidewalk across the street was a stranger, long-legged and narrow, but she moved with a certain grace. She walked alone toward the intersection, her arms crossed, holding library books against her middle.

Varga started the motor of the stolen truck. He had to time this right. The act had to be quick. If they were spotted, weeks of slide-rule planning would be wasted.

And he would not have his revenge!

From the back of the truck, a swarthy man chuckled. "Hey, man, she's a looker too. Huh, Artist?" Dark eyes gleamed in new anticipation.

"Heavy, Pope," breathed the long-haired youth who was squatted beside him. He sniffed hard through a long nose, then coughed.

Varga winced. In the last month, he had learned to dislike Artist Bass and to fear Steve Pope. But they had been Iris' selections when he first had laid out his plan to her. And his plan called for help. He and Iris couldn't pull the job alone. There was too much scheduled to happen in the next twenty-four hours.

So artist and Pope had been brought in. They were regulars at the joint where Iris had been a nudie. She knew them, knew what made them tick. Iris had few talents, but she had a lush body, and she was an exhibitionist. The combination had made her an expert on men. She had vowed Artist and Pope were the kind of men needed in a million dollar caper.

"Move, man, or you're going to miss her!" Pope hissed, jerking Varga back at the moment.

He snapped the truck into gear and rolled across the intersection, glancing up and down the crossed street. All looked quiet. One car was mov-

ing toward them from the left, but it was far away. And the rest of the residential neighborhood seemed to be lolling in late afternoon lethargy, caught up in the stillness that preceded the daily storm of office workers rushing to green lawns from downtown concrete.

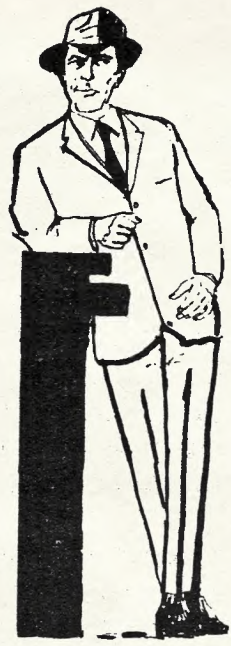
Varga's heart pounded hard as he braked the truck against the curbing. He kept the motor running and twisted on the seat. Artist and Pope were crouched at the rear doors of the truck now. Suddenly they threw the doors open and pounced on the girl. She yelped, library books flew. Then the girl came skidding into the truck, sliding on her front. Artist and Pope jumped inside, yanked the doors shut.

"Roll!" Pope snapped. He had snaked out a gun, was crouched at the rear windows.

Varga moved the truck. He had to steel his foot. The temptation was to jam the accelerator to the floor. But he managed to drive at a sane pace, watching the reflections in the rear view mirror more than he watched the street ahead. Iris kept a lookout in the rear view mirror on the passenger side.

"Clean," she breathed after three blocks. "Nothing behind us."

Varga risked a look into the



back of the truck. Lisa English lay trussed on the floor. She was face up, wrists taped together under her spine, another slash of adhesive tape plastered against her mouth and cheeks. She was breathing hard and her eyes were wide in fright.

Artist and Pope flanked her. They sat facing each other, buttocks on the floor, knees high, spines braced against the side of the truck. Artist grinned down on the girl from under the floppy hat, the brim of the hat shielding the top half of his face from Varga. He seemed at ease.

Pope stared at her. He was grinning, too. But there was a savagery in the twist of his

face, the brittleness of his dark eyes. He reached out and patted the girl's bare thigh. The girl writhed.

"No!" Varga yelped.

"Watch where you're driving!" Iris snapped. She pushed the steering wheel.

Varga regripped the wheel, straightened the path of the truck. He breathed harshly. He had been heading into the curbing. Iris probably had saved them from smashing into a tree.

Varga shuddred. He had to get a grip on himself, take firm hold of the happenings. After all, he was supposed to be the leader, he had planned all of this, it was his operation.

He stiffened as he felt the muzzle of the gun pressed lightly against his neck. Pope snarled, "Don't tell me no, man. If I want the cat, I take the cat!"

"You don't take anything, Stevie-boy," Iris said without looking at him. "You do all of your taking *after* the next twenty-four hours. There's plenty ahead. With your cut, you can forget the kids. You'll be able to afford *women*. Now put that goddamn popgun away."

But it was twenty seconds before the muzzle of the gun left Varga's neck. He sucked a rattling breath. The best day of his life was to be tomorrow. Tomorrow night they all would be in Mexico, rich, he and Iris would be heading for Mexico City and the commercial flight to Rome—but best of all, Pope would be out of his life forever and ever.

"We on schedule?" Artist asked from the back of the truck.

Iris glanced at the silver wristwatch again. In a couple of days she would be wearing a gold watch, new and sparkling. And in another week maybe she'd have it figured out how she was going to ditch Varga. Maybe she'd figure it after they were snug in Rome and she had time to think. Walking out was no problem, of course. She'd have her two hundred and fifty thousand and she knew how to stealthily open a door while a man slept. Latching on to Varga's two-fifty was going to be the problem.

But she'd figure something that would work.

"We're doing okay," she said. "Plenty of time to get to the rec center. I just hope—"

She cut off the words, then grinned. "The kid didn't pick this afternoon to go make out with his girlfriend after school instead of going to his handball game."

"He'll be there," Varga said quickly. "He plays handball

until six o'clock *every* Tuesday afternoon."

THE BOY pushed open one of the large double doors of the city recreation center at ten minutes after six o'clock on that Tuesday afternoon and moved on quick strides toward the small motorcycle propped in the side parking lot.

He was a short, stocky youth with semi-long brown hair, wet and shiny now from shower. He carried an orange helmet in his right hand, and he didn't pay any particular attention to the faded white panel truck parked across from the cycle, the rear doors open, two men bent and seemingly struggling with something heavy inside the truck.

"Hey, kid," one of the men called out, "can you give us a hand?"

The boy hesitated, looked at the truck. He saw a driver, someone on the other side of the driver. At the back of the truck a slight, dark man was erect, waiting for his answer. Then the other man stood erect. He wore an easy grin under a floppy hat.

"We've got a heavy desk in here," said the man with the floppy hat. "All we need is a little help jerking it to the doors. The driver's a cripple, can't help with the deliveries. And that's his wife sitting on the other side."

The boy approached the truck slowly. Uneasiness was alive inside him. He stopped, stood thumping the orange helmet against his thigh unconsciously.

Floppy Hat looked okay. He was grinning, relaxed, but the other guy was hard-looking. Tough.

"Come on, kid," said the tough-looking man.

The boy didn't move. He sensed an ominousness about the man, something sinister. It scared him.

The man proved to be snake-quick. He leaped forward, caught the boy in the half turn. He shoved a gun hard against the boy's flat stomach. "Move it, kid," he snarled.

The boy shuffled toward the back of the truck. He was tense but seeking an opportunity. He might be able to slash down with his arm, knock the gun hand away, smash one of the two men with his helmet.

He glanced inside the back of the truck, saw the trussed girl on the floorboard. She was straining, head up. Her eyes were wide, her mouth taped, and she was shaking her head violently.

The boy lashed out with his arms. And then something

smashed the back of his head, driving him down to his knees immediately and bringing blackness.

He was out cold.

Varga squealed the rear tires of the truck moving out of the parking lot. He damned himself silently, swiped perspiration from his left eye, forced himself to lift the accelerator foot.

"Clear back here," Artist said from the rear door windows. "Nobody comin'."

"Looks clean, it looks clean," Iris muttered, eyes glued to the reflection of the mirror at her side.

"Why didja hafta hit him?" wheezed Varga. "Jesus, if anybody saw that it was a dead give-away!"

"You wanted him, didn't you?" Pope snarled. "You got him!"

Varga glanced over his shoulder. Tony Littrel was face down on the floor of the truck, unmoving.

"Is he—is he?"

"He's okay," Pope said, hefting the gun and waving it in mild warning. "Dreamland, that's all. Saves taping him."

"Tape him," Iris ordered. "We don't take no more chances than necessary. We've got two more to go."

They abducted Jack Caulkins as he jogged along a quiet residential street, and they yanked Christina Jacobsen from a bicycle in Herman Park.

Forty-five minutes later, they were backed into the loading dock at the rear of the abandoned factory building in a dark, seedy area of the city. They walked Jack Caulkins and the two girls into the building. Then Artist breathed, "Hey, man, we got a problem. This one is dead."

Varga froze on the loading platform. His heart beat wildly. Artist was squatted inside the truck beside the Littrel boy, the light from the flash strong on the youth's spine.

Iris and Pope pushed past Varga, joined Artist. They examined the boy. "Goddamn . . ." whispered Iris. Pope said nothing.

Iris came out of the truck suddenly, took command. "We take the other three upstairs, put them away as planned, but we'll have to get rid of this kid. You do it when you take the truck, Stevie-boy."

"The hell with that," growled Pope. "We've had the heap for hours now. Every car bull in town has got its make and number. Wheelin' it is chancy enough. I don't want no stiffs in the back end!"

"I'll take him," Artist said, moving out to the dock. "Help me load him into Varga's car." Artist was grinning.

Varga exploded: "Wait a minute! This changes everything! This—"

"It doesn't change anything," Iris said evenly. "So we dangle three plums instead of four. Damnit, I told you way back in the beginning, doll: we could get as much mileage out of two kids as four. You didn't listen, natch, because you had this plan, the *master* plan all laid out. Well, it's slightly different now, baby, but we're still going for the million! We've gone too far to turn back! Okay, let's get the other three upstairs to their beds."

"You stay here, Varga," Artist said. "Keep an eye on the corpse. "Don't let anyone steal him." He chuckled.

III

VARGA SAT on the edge of the loading dock. He was greasy with sweat and he felt disjointed. His heart beat hard, there was a weakness in his muscles and his mind raced.

Maybe he should split while he had the chance. His car was there, just to his left, just where he had parked it that afternoon as they had launched the kidnaping operation. The car was six years old, had dents and rattles, windshield splayed on the passenger side, but the motor was tuned, the tires new. The car would carry him north to New York, Chicago, Minneapolis.

And he had about a hundred bucks in cash in his pocket, his last dime. He could make it. He'd prefer to fly, of course, prefer to wing on his own —piloting a plane alone was the only time he ever really felt at peace with life and the world—but that was out. Unless . . .

Maybe he could find a plane at International, steal it.

No! The theft would draw all of the attention to him, free the others, just what he didn't need. He'd drive.

He dropped from the loading dock to his feet, then discovered his legs wouldn't work. He stood there, fighting a fierce inner struggle. The others still were upstairs.

Even if they heard the start of the car motor, he could be gone and free of all this before they reached the dock area. On the other hand, he was giving up an opportunity of acquiring a tremendous bundle of cash, a good life with the lush Iris in some faraway place—and his revenge.

He seethed suddenly. In his mind's eye, he briefly relived the angry conference with Alexander Johnson, his immediate superior in the city Health Department, Johnson

informing him he was being terminated from the city payroll and handing him a work evaluation report to show him why. Johnson had typed: "General incompetence, laziness."

Now Varga attempted to blank his mind. The words hurt deep. His only wish was that Johnson had had a child. But Alexander Johnson was a bachelor.

Varga used his hands to hoist himself back up on the loading dock. The city of Miami was going to pay!

He heard the trio approaching from behind him. Artist said, "All of the kiddies are tucked neatly into bed, man. You still got my corpse?"

Varga held up the car keys without looking around.

Artist took the keys. "So let's get him into the front seat. Prop him up just like he's a drunken passenger. Who's gonna know? This is wild!" He laughed.

Varga didn't move. Artist and Pope loaded the dead Littrel boy. They propped his head against the window on the passenger side. Artist grinned and rubbed his palms in glee, then dashed around the car and drove away.

Pope snarled,. "That kid's nuts."

"So he gets his jollies drivin' stiffs around town. So?" shrugged Iris.

"I think I'm going to be sick," said Varga.

Pope muttered an oath and leaped down from the dock. "Hold his head, cat, while I dump this heap."

PORTER "Artist" Bass kept the speed of the sedan under the posted city limits. This was wild! He wondered how many other people in the world could boast they had carted a corpse around town, a stiff propped up in the front seat, that is.

He laughed to himself, kept an eye on the street. Traffic was light. In a way he wished it were daylight and the traffic was heavy. Popped eyes staring at him from other heaps would be kicks.

He laughed louder, slapped the steering wheel. Maybe he should stop at a drive-in, order a burger!

Hey, cool it, man. Varga's plan held potential. It cried of wild happenings to come. The payoff tomorrow, the plane ride. He'd never been inside an airplane. That might be exciting. Mexico! He'd never been to Mexico. And he knew Mexico would be exciting. He could sense it in his bones. The two hundred and fifty thou—his cut—it'd get him to Rio. Eventually.

Rio. Beautiful. He could sprawl in the sun and sketch beautiful things. No mugs. God, no more mugs. He had his gut full of mugs, detectives, informers, raped housewives, robbed bankers, slugged truck drivers leaning over his shoulder, telling him to remove this line, add thickness there, shape the eyebrows down just a shade more, the corners of the mouth up.

"There! There he is! My rapist! My robber! My hijacker! That's him, officer! Right there on the boy's pad! That's the man who did it to me!"

Once he had thought being an artist for cops might be exciting. Dullsville. He'd retired after two months.

This was more like it. The real scene, man. Driving around town with a stiff propped up beside you. Wildsville.

But he had a hunch he'd better watch Pope. Pope would turn on anyone, make for a bad scene. Pope was a loner, an iceman. Pope might even be harboring ideas about knocking off the three of them, splitting with all of the mill.

Had to watch Varga too. Varga was nervous and frightened. He had a brain, all right, was a squirrel for detail. It showed in how he had everybody scoped, had all of the pickups laid out, timed perfectly.

But Varga was no good when things didn't fall into place. The weakness had surfaced when Pope had laid on the kid and killed him. Varga had gone bananas for awhile, and still was walking on nail ends.

Iris? Write her off. Iris was going to end up in a grave, with or without her cut. Yeah, she and Varga might split together, go off to the mountains somewhere, but nobody was going to keep Iris in the mountains. Iris would come down out of the hills and flaunt herself before the masses.

Eventually, someone was going to come out of those masses and kill Iris. It might be passion, rejection, jealousy —hell, her killer might even be

Varga. Maybe he should stick with Varga and Iris for awhile. Maybe he'd get the opportunity to haul a stiff Iris to her grave .

How sweet *that* would be!

He laughed again, braked for a red stoplight. Okay, time to conjure. Where to drop a corpse? No rooftop, no alley. Too gauche. He needed to spark someone's life tonight, provide a jolt.

Like to that old couple standing there on the curbing, gaping at him. They had the green walk light. Why didn't they walk?

Ahhh. They had lamped the stiff propped against the side window glass. Maybe he should get out of the car, offer them the corpse to take home.

IV

MIKE SHAYNE, private detective, was involved with the memory of a frightened, desperate, end-of-the-road, would-be bank robber. Shayne dallied with an after-dinner cognac, cupped the small glass in his hand and absently swirled the amber liquid around.

"Michael?" Lucy Hamilton said from across the table.

He glanced up, gave his secretary a rueful grin, suddenly hunched forward. "It isn't often I get caught up, Angel," he said. He shook his head. "But this guy . . . this guy had no more business trying to rob a bank, being in jail than—"

"I know, Michael," Lucy said tenderly. Then she brightened. "Ready?"

"For what?"

"For a round of gin rummy."

He laughed abruptly. The desperate bank robber vanished. He suddenly felt himself again. Lucy Hamilton was infectious. He drank the cognac, sipped ice water.

The Purple Duck, one of Miami's new club-restaurants, had gained a quick reputation for good food and excellent service. The steak had been large and tender, the salad crisp, the waiter efficient and pleasant, and it was difficult to ruin straight Hennessey's, so Shayne was reasonably comfortable as he paid the tab and escorted Lucy from the dining room area.

The Purple Duck did not hold a candle to The Beef House or The Golden Cock, a couple of the detective's favorite haunts, but Lucy's whim to try the new club seemed to have been appeased—if the twinkle in her brown eyes and the touch of smile that curled the corners of her delicate lips now were any indication—and Shayne was satisfied.

So to the gin game where his secretary's smile would disap-

pear. Lucy was a fierce competitor.

Outside the club, the nine-thirty night air was warm and clear, the sky bright with stars. Shayne was forced to shorten his stride slightly as he walked with Lucy into the parking area.

He towered over her, a hulk of a man, bulky yet lean, wide-shouldered, trim-hipped, thick but flat in body depth. To anyone observing him, it would seem that he was keyed, but inside the large body, his muscles and nerves were relaxed, his emotions tempered, and his mind toyed only with the slightly amusing thoughts of Lucy sitting alertly erect at the huge coffee table in her apartment, lamplight glints in her brown curls, her long fingers flying as she fed the gin hands.

The extra shadow changed him. Shayne stopped in midstride, tensed, caught Lucy's arm in a reflexive movement. His fingers flicked across his coat buttons, opening the coat to give him swift access to the .45 fitted snugly in the shoulder rig.

"Michael?" Lucy breathed, unmoving.

"Easy, Angel," he growled.

He stared hard through the darkness. The outline of his parked Buick was sharp against the reflected lights of the shopping center on the next street. The Buick sat at the end of the row of automobiles and was a couple of feet longer than any other car in the row.

It had another distinction. He had backed into the parking slot. The placing gave him a profile of the hood now. That profile was not right. There was an extra bulk. And the bulk was lumpy, without distinctive lines. It bulged from the Buick's windshield.

"Stick, Angel," Shayne said.

He eased forward, muscles and nerves prepared for action and reaction, eyes and ears tuned. His blood churned. He kept his right hand low and cocked across his middle. From the position, he could draw quickly, even while diving, if that became necessary, and trigger a shot from the .45.

The bulk on the hood of the Buick took shape, became the figure of a slouched man. He looked as if he were sleeping or sprawled in drunken oblivion. He didn't stir.

Shayne eased slightly, lengthened his strides. He kept a sharp lookout to right and left, inventorying the shadows between the parked vehicles. No foreign shadows reared, no attack home.

He stood against the bumper of the Buick, looked around. He saw no one except Lucy out-

lined now against the lights of The Purple Duck. Lucy had not moved.

He went around to the driver's side of the Buick and clutched the shirt front of the slouched figure in his huge left hand. The figure spilled toward him, was flaccid and heavy. Shayne caught the bulk and knew immediately he was holding a youth. He eased the boy down to the macadam surface of the parking area, stretched him out flat on his spine. Opening the Buick door, he dived inside and yanked out the flash.

The strong light showed a boy, probably in his late teens. The boy wore faded blue tennies, no socks, tight jeans, a white T-shirt. He looked toned. His skin was smooth and brown. But his head lolled and his mouth was open. Shayne put the back of his hand against the open mouth. The boy was not breathing.

"M-Michael?"

Shayne looked up. Lucy stood at the hood of the Buick. "Someone left us a dead kid, Angel," he said grimly.

He fished a wallet from a pocket of the jeans, flipped it open to identification cards. He found a driver's license.

"Anthony Littrel," he read aloud and scowled.

Littrel. The name had a familiar ring. From where?

V

MIAMI POLICE Chief Will Gentry was an incongruous figure in the private office at police headquarters that Tuesday night.

He was the familiar solid bulk slouched deep in an old-fashioned wooden swivel chair behind a littered desk. There was an evil-smelling black cigar stub stuck in a corner of his bulldog face. His brows were drawn down tight, his eyes were hard slits, calculating, and his stomach growled periodically.

But that was where all blending into the blandness of the small room ended. Gentry wore a bright yellow and red-flowered shirt open to his chest, faded sand-colored military trousers, new sky-blue canvas shoes, and a wrinkled hat with the short brim turned down. He had been yanked from his boat at the marina.

"Judge," he said, his tone flat, "you can go home now. It's late, almost midnight. You've done all you can do here, and you've still got a tough chore ahead of you."

"Yes," nodded the small man who sat in the straight chair in front of the desk.

From his perch on a corner of Will Gentry's desk, Shayne watched Municipal Judge An-

drew Littrel stand. The detective thought the judge was holding up well, considering he had earlier identified a dead boy in the morgue as his only son, Tony, age 17, a senior at Kennedy High School.

The judge's skin color was bad, his shoulders sagged and he was unable to completely control the quivering of his lips, but he seemed to be regaining strength. "It will be a long night, gentlemen," he said quietly. "Mrs. Littrel will not understand why she no longer will hear the sound of the motorcycle. Only this afternoon it was a sound she barely tolerated. Tonight it will become a cherished sound."

The judge bit his lower lip, blinked hard, then looked Will Gentry in the eye. "I will await your call. We will want to make proper funeral arrangements as soon as possible. Good evening."

Gentry nodded, remained silent.

When Judge Littrel was gone, Shayne lit a cigarette, drew deeply on it. "Damnit, Will," he said impatiently, "where's Sturgis? How long does it take to check—"

"It takes a couple of hours, shamus," said a deep voice from the doorway, "and you can consider that swift. We got lucky, found the people we wanted without prowling all over town."

Len Sturgis, one of Gentry's ablest detectives working out of Homicide, entered the office, turned the straight chair, straddled it and sat, thumbing a hat to the back of his head. He was a middle-aged man with a receding hairline and a straightforward manner.

"The judge's speculation checks, Chief," he said. "The boy seems to have followed normal routine. He went from school to the recreation center where he was on a handball court until five forty-five. He showered, dressed, and walked out the front door. The guy working the center's desk remembers Tony leaving. He says the boy was alone.

"And the guy says he didn't see or hear anything out of the ordinary before, at, or after Tony's departure. There is one little wrinkle though. The rec place closes at nine, but it's about nine-thirty or so when the employees get out of there, lock up. Tonight they spotted Tony's cycle still in the parking lot, thought it strange. It was the only cycle in the lot.

"They decided the boy hadn't been able to get it started, had left it. They put it inside the building for overnight. No one bothered to look it over. We've got it now. One of our people

checked it out. It purrs like a small tiger."

Shayne used the thumb and forefinger of his right hand to tug the lobe of his left ear as he reconstructed aloud: "Judge Littrel said his son was due home for dinner at six-thirty, but the boy doesn't make it and his bike is still at the rec place. Was he hit in the parking lot? Damn funny somebody didn't see a killing in a parking lot of a public place at six o'clock in the evening. It's light and you figure there are people around.

"There's another angle too. It was three-and-a-half hours later when I found the body, and I doubt it had been on the hood of my car long. People were coming in and leaving the club in a pretty steady stream while Lucy and I were there. Somebody would have spotted the body, howled. So I'm making it this way: Tony Littrell was kidnaped, killed later, then his body dumped on my car just a few minutes before Lucy and I walked out of the Purple Duck."

Gentry nodded and said sourly, "Doc is pretty sure about his preliminary finding, figures it will hold officially in the morning. Death caused by a blow from a blunt instrument against the back of the skull. What we need is motive! *Why* was the boy killed? In a fight? Or did some other kid have a beef against him? Was it an accident? Was it deliberate?

He was interrupted by the short ring of his phone. He yanked up the receiver, scowled. His stomach rumbled as he listened, then he said testily, "Phillips, we've all got problems! I'm not in to anyone. Not at midnight, for God's sake!"

Gentry slammed the phone together and mumbled, "Kooks. Some old nut been calling in all night, wants me, claims he saw a cadaver being hauled around town, wants to tell me about it, been driving Phillips up the wall with his calls, says—"

The phone interrupted him again. He jerked the receiver to his ear. "Phillips, I told you to—" He broke off the words, listened hard.

Shayne watched Gentry's face darken, saw the cigar stub tilt higher. Gentry's eyes became stilts. He put the phone together slowly this time, said from deep thought, "That was Anderson in Missing Persons. He's got kind of an odd thing going. Earlier tonight he had two reports on missing kids, teenagers. Both girls.

"One is a Lisa English, daughter of Lawrence English, city planning coordinator. She failed to come home for dinner from a stop at the Urbandale

Library, and hasn't been heard from since. The other is Christina Jacobson, daughter of Barbara Jacobson, the mayor's personal secretary. The kid went bike riding after dinner, disappeared.

"And now Anderson just god a third call. It was from Jason Bundy of the city attorney's staff. His wife's son, Jack Caulkins, seems to have dropped from sight. He was supposed to be home at nine, hasn't shown. They know the boy was playing chess with an ex-school teacher friend earlier tonight, but he left the teacher's place around eight. Then—nothing."

Gentry paused, bit hard on the cigar stub. "Got the connections?" he said after a few heartbeats. "Three teens—and all offspring of city employees."

"And the Littrell boy, Will," Shayne said bluntly.

"Mike, what the hell is going on?" the chief rasped.

VI

SHAYNE FOUND OUT what was going on early the next morning. A ransom demand for one million dollars from the City of Miami was received by the mayor.

"Fantastic!" breathed the mayor, shaking his head. "I'm having trouble, Mr. Shayne, believing this is happening. Forgive me."

Shayne sat in a leather barrel chair placed directly in front of the mayor's polished desk. The only items on the desk were a telephone, a yellow legal pad, a ballpoint pen, the ransom note and its envelope.

The mayor sat in a huge, black leather chair behind the desk. He was cocked forward on his elbows, a thin, impeccably

dressed man with shiny skin and troubled eyes. He scowled at Shayne.

"All right," he said abruptly, his voice suddenly level. He was in command of his emotions again. "We are confronted, Mr. Shayne, with three kidnaped children, frightened parents, and a demand for one million dollars in cash."

There may have been a fourth, I'm told. The son of Judge Littrel. That, of course, is speculation. There is no mention of the boy in this note.

"However, Mr. Shayne, I called you in, because both Judge Littrel and I have a deep feeling that all four cases *are* related. The police are doing all they can—but . . . Well, Judge Littrel especially wants you. He insists on hiring you, and personally, I'm enclined to agree with him. Officially, I'm sure the police and public agencies will do all they can. Still, they *are* public . . ." He let it hang.

Shayne picked up on it. "You feel I might be able to do more in a private capacity?" When the Mayor nodded, Shayne went on, "I really feel the police are in a better position to handle it."

The mayor interrupted him. "Nevertheless, both Judge Littrel and I want to hire you. We want police involvement at a minimum. You are the best in town, we understand. We have," he emphasized, "already decided."

"I'll do all I can, of course," Shayne stated.

"Good," The mayor said, obviously relieved. "Here is the note we received." He pushed it across the desk to Shayne, who quickly scanned it.

The note had been penciled in crude block letters. It might have been the printing of a kindergartener: "We have three kids. Want $1 million. Cash. Wednesday, 4 P.M. You bring. Flamingo Park. We'll be watching. These kids can die!"

"There's a death threat in that note, Mayor," Shayne reminded him grimly, "and already there's one dead kid down at the morgue. Put it together. Someone has been planning, someone had these kids spotted, their habits catalogued, someone made a sweep. Someone knew when to find the English girl leaving the library, young Littrel leaving the recreation center, the Jacobson girl out bike riding, and the Caulkins boy leaving a chess game. You add it that way, mayor, and you've got a pretty damn tight package."

"And?"

"What I'm saying," Shayne continued, "is that this is a police matter already. They generally allow a free hand to

private individuals in a kidnapping case—until the freedom of the victim is secured —or his death."

The mayor drew a breath. "I had hoped to keep this quiet for a few hours."

"The only way you can keep this kind of plot quiet, Mayor," Shayne said gruffly, shifting impatiently in his chair, "is with the cooperation of the media. Too many people are involved. Parents, friends . . ." He waved a hand. "Anyway, I'm inclined to feed everything we've got to the police and the media. If we clam up, the kidnapers are likely to think some hanky-panky is taking place. They don't ask us to keep it quiet. They seem to want publicity.

Grimly, Shayne continued, "I think this may be the first time out for the kidnapers. Take the ransom note. One of your people, Mayor, comes to work a little early, finds the note propped on a wash basin in a public lavatory. Somebody had to walk into this building this morning, put the note there. That's taking a chance . . ."

Shayne waved an arm. "It's popular now, but I don't believe a pro would risk that kind of exposure if it was unnecessary—and it was unnecessary since you have a telephone. Why expose yourself making delivery of a ransom note when all you have to do is use the U.S. mail or pick up a telephone?"

"Fear of bugging?" the Mayor suggested.

Shayne snorted. "Not likely. It would be more likely that the homes of the victims,' parents would be bugged. Not a Civic office."

"I see your point," the mayor agreed, eyes squeezed down. "Joe Pierce—it was Joe Pierce who found the note—called me at my home before eight o'clock. Normally, gentlemen, foot traffic in this building is not heavey before nine a.m. So the deliverer didn't even wait for the heavy flow of people around the building, an hour when he could be just another face in the hundreds of faces that are in and out daily."

A light on his phone blinked on, the phone buzzed. The mayor frowned, reached, hesitated. "Excuse me. I was not to be disturbed, however there is a substitute for Ms. Jacobson this morning. She phoned me during the night about her missing daughter; I told her not to come in today. But I didn't think—didn't realize . . ."

He lifted the receiver to his ear without finishing his thought. And then his frown deepened and he stared hard at Mike Shayne. "Oh? Just a mo-

ment, please." He cupped the phone. "You know a newspaperman named Tim Rourke with the *Daily News*?"

Shayne grunted an acknowledgement. Rourke was a veteran reporter, and Shayne and the cadaverous-looking reporter had been friends ever since the redhead arrived in Miami.

The mayor said hesitantly, "Mr. Rourke informs me he has had a telephone call from a man who says that four young people were kidnaped last night and that one is dead. The caller told him I knew the details, and wanted to know why there wasn't anything in the morning paper."

Shayne reached across the desk and took the proffered phone from the mayor's hand. "Tim."

"Mike! What the devil are you doing—"

"Give it to me, Tim. Just like the guy said it."

Shayne listened, then snapped, "He mentioned the Littrel boy by name, huh, but none of the others. And said the mayor knew about it?"

"Mike, our overnight police reporter picked up the report on the Littrel kid. He made the final city edition with it, but that's all. He had trouble getting the facts. Gentry's boys were dragging their heels here and there. We've got it fullblown this morning, of course, but where the hell do these other three fit? Were there four kidnapings last night?"

Shayne ignored the question. "The voice, Tim. Anything distinctive about it?"

"Naw. Youngish, I'd say . . ." Rourke paused, then said, "Well, hell, Mike the guy actually sounded disappointed because we didn't have the full story. So give, huh? This nut wants the world to know what he's done!"

"Okay, Tim, get over here and talk to the mayor. He'll give you what he has. Then you might want to track down Len Sturgis later. He's been on top of this from the beginning, at least he was on it last night."

"Hey, Mike, wait a minute! Can't you and I meet some—"

"I'm rolling, Tim. Maybe I'll have something else for you in an hour or two."

Shayne put the phone together, looked at the mayor. "We're dealing with a brazen bastard or bastards. He puts a body on the hood of a car in an open parking lot, he walks into a public lavatory in a city building and leaves a demand for one million bucks, and then he calls the newspaper and wants to know why they don't have a story.

"Whoever these people are,

no matter how many of them are in on the plot, there's one among them who is a kook or a publicity hound. And that's a scratch on our side, Mayor. Sooner or later, he gets too brazen."

"We don't have much time to wait for him," the Mayor said anxiously. "Not if the city meets the payoff demand. That's at four this afternoon, just five hours from now."

"Get it done," Shayne snapped. "Hit the bank boys, lay it on them, twist arms, necks. Get the cash, Mayor. We may have to actually make that delivery."

The redhead stood to leave and turned toward the door.

"Mr. Shayne," the mayor halted him, "About one thing. It is not your time. It is my own and Judge Littrel's time. Please bill us. Cost is—no object."

"I'll think about it," Shayne growled, heading for the door.

VII

SHAYNE DIALED the central desk at police headquarters from a pay phone. He got Guy Andretti, with whom he had a wave-of-the-hand acquaintance. Andretti checked the records of the overnight trick, gave the detective the information he wanted and the name Alfred Fowler and a street address. Shayne now knew all the police did. And maybe more.

It was purely hunch, Shayne knew. But Phillips' call to Gentry when Shayne had been at the police station had bothered him. Two old people wanting to report a corpse in a car . . . Right time, but was it the right place? Or only excitable elders? Shayne determined to find out.

On the way to the Fowler residence, Shayne half listened to radio music until the five-minute newscast came on. He listened intently as the newsman got excited over the murder of Anthony Littrel, son of Municipal Judge and Mrs. Andrew Littrel. The Littrel boy had been found by Michael Shayne, a famed Miami private investigator, whose secretary said he was unavailable for comment.

There was no mention of four kidnapings.

The fowler bungalow tilted slightly and was located in the heart of a retiree, Social Security neighborhood. The street was quiet, the houses small. Most of the area was neat.

Alfred and Martha Fowler were tidy too. Alfred Fowler was bent at the shoulders, but sprite. Martha was birdlike, alert, but obviously had a sight problem. She sat in a deep chair four feet from the television tube; it was easy for her to

reach out and turn down the sound.

"Martha," said Alfred, unable to totally surpress a moment of victory, "this is Mr. Shayne—a *detective*! Someone at police headquarters finally listened to me!"

Martha squinted at the large redhead from behind thick glasses. "You are not a *police* detective, Mr. Shayne," she said. "I heard on the news this morning. You are a *private* detective."

"But working with the police, Mrs. Fowler," Shayne said.

"See, Alfred?" said Martha. She sat stiffly erect in minor triumph. "You and your Chief Gentry, humph! Whatever makes you think you can pick up the phone and talk to the chief of police whenever you want to!"

"Chief Gentry got Mr. Fowler's message," Shayne said. "I'm here on Chief Genry's behalf."

"Oh?" She seemed to contemplate, then she said, "Are you really a private detective, Mr. Shayne? I thought . . . I thought . . ." She fidgeted, then blurted. "Well, I've never been sure real private detectives exist!"

"Martha watches a lot of television," put in Alfred Fowler. "She especially likes private detective shows."

"Tell me about this cadaver you think you saw last night, Mr. Fowler. Where did you see it, what time?"

A tiny chink in a giant puzzle fell into place. Maybe. The street the Fowlers had been attempting to cross at the time Alfred Fowler saw his cadaver was the same street that fronted the Purple Duck where Shayne and Lucy had dined.

The club was far across the city, but the chauffeur for a stiff could have been cruising, looking for a disposal point. And the time fit. Martha Fowler was trying to get home to catch the beginning of a nine o'clock television program. Twenty minutes by auto from this area to the Purple Duck? No sweat.

What could the Fowlers tell the detective about the driver of the car?

Well . . . nothing really. Alfred Fowler hadn't looked at the driver. He'd been too fascinated by his discovery of the corpse.

How about a license number?

Ah . . . no. Alfred Fowler hadn't caught it, and Martha Fowler couldn't see it. Martha Fowler's vision wasn't what it used to be.

"What kind of a car was it?" Shayne pressed.

"Old. Dark on the bottom, light on top. Just an old car,"

Alfred Fowler answered vaguely.

"Do you know the make?"

Neither of the Fowlers knew. "I don't keep up with car designs anymore," said Alfred Fowler. "Can't; they all look alike to me."

Shayne felt as if he was very close yet very far away from something tangible in the Littrel boy's death.

"There was the cadaver and the driver, that's all?" he pressed. "You didn't see anyone in the back seat of the car?"

"No one was in the back sea," said Alfred Fowler emphatically.

"There was that windshield, Alfred," Martha put in.

"What about it, Mrs. Fowler?" Shayne said, instantly alert.

"It was cracked. It was like maybe . . . maybe a rock had hit it. It was sorta . . . sorta spider webby on the passenger side. Maybe that's a clue. Is it, Mr. Shayne?"

"It could be, Mrs. Fowler," the detective said, nodding reflexively from deep thought.

Outside the Fowler house, Shayne sat behind the steering wheel of the Buick and stared without seeing. What had he gained?

From what he had learned from the Fowlers, there was no real tie, nothing that said con-

cretely the cadaver—if there had been a cadaver—Fowler claimed to have seen was Tony Littrel.

Shayne slammed the steering wheel. The contradiction of the case gnawed him. On the one hand, the kidnapings had been timed. They'd been pulled off one, two, three, four. That took long observation. That smelled of someone who was thorough, patient. And the pickups had been precisioned.

On the other hand, there was the brazenness: possibly a body being hauled like a passenger in the front seat of a car, certainly the dumping of the body in the openness of a club parking lot at an early evening hour, certainly the delivery of a ransom demand, then the tele-

phoning of a newspaper reporter.

It almost was like someone was secretly laughing at the police.

Shayne lit a cigarette, drew smoke deep. Had they missed a clue in the individual pickup of the kids? He mentally reviewed the rest of the information Andretti had given him.

It appeared as if Lisa English had been the first to be snatched by the kidnapers. Lisa was a girl of order. Tuesdays were library days. Every Tuesday morning, while walking to Urbandale High School, Lisa returned books to the Urbandale Public Library. After school, on Tuesdays, Lisa returned to the library where she normally spent an hour to an hour-and-a-half.

Then she walked the seven blocks to her home, usually arriving between five-fifteen and five-forty-five p.m. She had been in the library Tuesday; she had not arrived at her home. Her checked out books had been found scattered on an intersection sidewalk two blocks from the library.

Tony Littrel may have been kidnaped next. Andretti had said it was his routine to ride his motorcycle from Kennedy High School to the recreation center every Tuesday where he was on a handball court until six. He normally went from the center to his home. He had been on the court this Tuesday, had not arrived home, and his cycle had been found at the recreation center.

Jack Caulkins, a student at Miami High School, had three interests—gymnastics, physical fitness and chess—and one passionate dislike; his second father, Jason Bundy, a young lawyer on the city attorney's staff.

Jack Caulkins' mother had divorced, remarried too quickly for the boy. Jack had retaliated by being argumentative, disobedient, antagonistic at home, and by seeking comfort and understanding with Randolph Parker, a retired Miami High School instructor and chess friend.

The boy and widower played chess at Parker's small home every school day evening from five to eight o'clock. The cutoff hour was at Parker's insistence. He also was using the three-hour, five-day-a-week period for subtle counseling, attempting to ease the boy into acceptance of a new man in the parental home.

Caulkins had left Parker at exactly eight o'clock Tuesday evening. Parker had stood in the doorway of the house and had watched the boy jog away.

Chris Jacobson had been

rapped early in life too. Her father had been killed in Vietnam. But mother and daughter had been able to regroup, had found surprising sturdiness inborn in each other. The same persistence carried over to physical well-being. Mother and daughter didn't need health problems. So they were bicyclists. Cycling helped keep them in good physical condition. And it was their habit to cycle nightly in Herman Park.

Except on Tuesdays. On Tuesdays, Chris came home from Tom Browne High School and prepared a light lunch so that it was ready with her mother's arrival from daily chores at the mayor's office at six. At seven Barbara Jacobson was off to join her bowling team. At eight Chris was alone on her bicycle in Herman Park.

After Lisa English and Tony Littrel, the kidnapers could have picked up Jack Caulkins and then Chris Jacobson, or Chris Jacobson and then Jack Caulkins. Order was not important . . .

Shayne moved the Buick away from the Fowler home. He drove too fast down the quiet street, cut across on a sidestreet and found an access road to the South Dixie Highway. He rolled along Dixie, heading toward the Orange Bowl Stadium.

He needed a lead, somebody tangible to chew on. He needed a common bond, something that would point. But all he had was four high school students, each in his or her teens. Okay, teens, students. Common bond. Then what? No two of them attended the same high school; their likes and dislikes were miles apart.

But . . .

Each was a creature of habit. In one way or another. At least on Tuesdays. Each had a rather set routine on Tuesdays. So it had allowed timing for kidnapers, someone with a keen eye.

Someone had pieced the routines, fitted the comings and goings to form a schedule. The habits, the routines, leant themselves to a timetable for snatching. The subjects were vulnerable.

Schedule. A common bond.

Another bond?

Each was the son or daughter of a city employee.

But that could figure. If you were going to demand a million dollars ransom from a city, and tell the mayor he was to make delivery of the city money, you wouldn't kidnap just any four kids leaning against street lamps. You'd attempt to get close to the mayor, you'd grab offspring of public or semi-public personalities, kids who would get news print on Page

One—against those who might draw Page Twelve.

Figure?

Yeah, figured.

Shayne wheeled into the parking lot at police headquarters, found an empty slot. He wanted to read the official report on the death of Tony Littrel. Perhaps the report would turn up some kind of lead. He didn't expect much.

On a guess, he figured the kid had died from a bash on the skull with a gun butt. But the boy's clothing might have produced telltale grains of dirt, lint. Pinpoints of plaster or brick might have been caught in his hair, under his fingernails,. Any or all could produce a lead to a possible death site.

Inside, Shayne shoved his hat to the back of his head and marched on determined strides into the detective room. No one paid any particular attention to him until he was weaving through the clutter of desks used by the detectives. One looked up and said, "Hey, the lost has returned."

Another said, "Hi yuh, Shayne. Go on in. The Chief is waiting for you."

Shayne stopped and scowled. "Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, he wants you now, man!" Flannigan shook his head. "He's climbing walls."

Shayne entered Gentry's private office. Gentry was at an open filing cabinet, stuffing a folder into a drawer. He looked at Shayne over his shoulder. A black cigar butt tilted up from the corner of his mouth, and his expression was sour.

"Anything from the Fowlers?"

"No. What's got you excited? I got the impression from Flannigan you've been looking for me."

"The mayor told me he and Judge Littrel had hired you. Well, we've got a present for you, Mike," Gentry said flatly. "It's in the morgue. Another dead kid. And this one was addressed to you."

VIII

THE BODY had been brought to police headquarters in the back end of a truck owned by a furniture store. Two confused and frightened delivery men were being interrogated by Homicide.

"These guys say they delivered a television set to a residence this morning, then stopped at a cafe out in the Hialeah area," said Gentry. "They were empty, they claim, but when they came out of the joint, they found a rear door of their truck open and Jack Caulkins' body inside.

"The boy was carrying a wal-

let, Mike. He also had a used business envelope stuffed in his shirt front. Printed on it was 'Deliver to Mike Shayne, detective'. The message was printed in pencil, same block letters as in the ransom demand."

"How was he killed, Will?"

Gentry's face darkened. "Preliminary makes it an odd one. The boy is crushed inside. Doc says he probably is just one big scramble, bone and innards. Feet, legs and pelvic area shattered. Doc is figuring he fell a long distance, probably hit ground on his feet."

"Sounds as if he was pitched or pushed."

"If either, he was riding the small end of the percentages. The chances of him landing on his feet would be damn thin."

Shayne stroked the reddish stubble along his jawline. His eyes were narrow and hard in deep thought. "The message. How come I'm singled out? Because my name is in the news this morning?"

"Could be," Gentry said slowly. "Or it could be the kidnapers want to be caught."

"That kind of stuff is for the shrinks, Will! If you really think that, get the docs in here! You don't need me! Anyway, if I'm picked because they heard my name on the radio, television, they also know I'm not a cop.

"Maybe they know I'm on the case, but Will, I'm riding a different horse. I figure we just caught another taunt, somebody throwing all of this in our face and then sitting back and chuckling.

"The guy may be a shrink candidate, but he's dangerous too—and he's got at least one partner. There's somebody in their camp who's straight. He's probably the planner, the kidnapings may be his baby. He may have laid it all out, then lost control of one or more of his troops. It's the contradiction that stinks."

"Uh-huh," said Gentry. He fired a cigar butt into a waste basket, yanked open a desk drawer, got out another butt, jammed it into a corner of his mouth. He sat for a moment in silence, then leaned forward, jerked the cigar butt from his lips and stabbed it at Shayne.

"Do you realize, that we have lost two of four kidnaped kids—and it's four hours yet to payoff time! What the hell, don't they want the money? *That's* what makes me think we're dealing with screwballs!"

"We don't know the circumstances, Will," Shayne said, struggling for logic. "The Littrel boy could have resisted being snatched. The Caulkins kid might have tried some kind of escape. Hell, if it's . . ."

Shayne steeled himself against the other thought, then added, "Will, if it's a wanton, methodical killing of the kids, we might as well sit here with our feet on the desk and accept the bodies as they are brought in! We're already whipped. They've got the kids, and we don't know where!"

"But maybe we've got a smell," Gentry said savagely, smacking the desk top. He stood.

Shayne lifted shaggy eyebrows. "You've got a lead?"

"We've got a citizen. A deaf mute, but he's a start. Sturgis is with him now. Name is Flato. He's got a room in a building across the street from the cafe where the delivery boys picked up their body.

"He claims he saw the transfer of a body from a car to the truck. He couldn't call us because he doesn't have a phone and he's a mute. By the time he got down to the street and found a friend to relay the message, the scene was clear: car and guy gone, delivery boys headed this way with their cargo.

"I've got an APB out on the car and the driver. Not much but it's a jumping off place. Chev., Plymouth or Pontiac, a sedan, anywhere from '67 to '70, blue bottom, white top. The blue is faded, and the top spotted, probably from rust drops.

It's a four door model with a cracked windshield, splayed on the passenger side. The driver was a loner, twenty-five to thirty years old with long dirty-blonde hair to shoulders, and a hawk nose, He wore faded denim jacket, open down front, orange and purple underneath, probably a tank shirt, denim pants, also faded, open sandals, floppy hat. Flato didn't get a good look at the guy's face."

"And no license number?"

"Angle was wrong, Flato says. He couldn't see the plate."

"The car the Fowlers saw, Will, also had a broken windshield," Shayne said from deep thought, "and was light-colored on top, dark on the bottom. It could be the same car. Neither kid was killed where he was found; each was delivered."

The phone on Gentry's desk jangled. He said, "Yeah?" into the mouthpiece, then listened intently for a long time. When he put the phone together, he stared hard at Shayne.

"That was Doc again. He's found a couple of interesting things on the Caulkins boy. Rope burns on the palms of his hands, and rope fibers imbedded in his clothing, traces of a musty, fishy odor about him. Doc's speculating the kid may have been aboard a boat very recently."

Shayne grunted. "Not a bad place to hide someone," he said. "At sea, waiting for the time of ransom delivery in the park. Maybe these people are figuring on cutting by sea too."

"I'll alert the Coast Guard, send teams of my people down to the marinas and clubs, all of the dock areas."

Shayne glanced at his watch. "You've talked with the mayor. how's he doing? Is he getting the money? Or did he say?"

Gentry looked mildly surprised. "Yeah, he's got it lined up," he said. "It's being hauled to his office from several sources. I've got men all over the place down there. So?"

Shayne pulled his ear lobe. "So I'm going out and have a couple of drinks—and then I'm going to take a walk with the mayor in Flamingo Park!"

"You are like hell!" Gentry snarled.

"Will, cool down and take a second look at this payoff setup," Shayne said patiently. "They want the mayor to be in the park at four o'clock with the money, but no other instructions are received. Okay, the mayor is to walk, that's all.

"So it could mean a running ripoff, or it could mean someone will meet him on the sidewalk, bring a gun out of nowhere, kill him and bolt with the dough. Or maybe he's going to be taken hostage, someone sticks a gun in his ear and marches him away—keeping cops at a distance.

"These characters can ripoff, kill or take *two* people hostage, Will. Damnit, they kidnaped four kids when one would have accomplished the same result! You figure they're going to get choosy about numbers now? They won't object to my presence. And the mayor did hire me."

Gentry stared for a long time in silence before he said, "Get the hell out of here. Let me think about it."

Shayne walked out of police headquarters. His steps were long, he planted his feet hard. He knew Gentry already had accepted his plan. The police habit of cooperating in a kidnap case was strong. But for

some crazy damn reason he didn't understand, he found himself suddenly remembering the quivering Tuesday noon bank robber he had captured. The novice.

Shayne growled in the bright sunlight as he turned into the parking lot. Novices. Trouble. Dangerous. Especially if they had guts. The Tuesday noon bank robber had been riding sheer desperation. He, basically, had been a frightened man. He had no real guts.

The Tuesday afternoon kidnapers? Novices maybe. But look what they had pulled so far. The Tuesday afternoon kidnapers had guts.

They could be big trouble in Flamingo Park.

IX

WILL GENTRY was with the mayor when Mike Shayne arrived. A new brown suitcase was on the carpeting beside the mayor's desk. The mayor looked like he'd just lost an election. Gentry was grim.

Shayne put a hip on a corner of the polished desk, lit a cigarette. Streaming smoke through his nostrils, he said, "Got the loot?"

"At your feet," Gentry said flatly.

Shayne kicked the suitcase, smoked.

Gentry took the cigar butt from his mouth, looked the detective straight in the eye. "These characters said they want the mayor, Mike. If he goes into Flamingo with an escort, they may not move. And if they don't move, we could have two dead girls on our hands."

Gentry jammed the cigar butt back into the corner of his mouth. His eyes didn't waver. "I think the mayor should go in solo. He says he can do it, and I've got the park blanketed like the President was going to show. But it's up to him—and you. We'll do what you want."

Shayne's ashes fell to the rich-looking carpeting. He ignored the spill. "They're going to swoop, Will. Whether the mayor's alone, or with an escort, they'll swoop. When they see the suitcase, they'll come in. If they'd asked for a couple of thousand, five or ten grand, and we didn't follow their instructions to the nut, I'd buy your thinking. But with a million at stake . . . Hell, they'll dive like vultures!"

Gentry's face darkened. He began to pace. He remained silent.

"Chi-ef?" The tremor seemed to surprise the mayor. He cleared his throat. "I'm nervous . . . yes, even frightened. My self-preservation instinct, I suppose. But I'll go to the park

alone, as I told you earlier. Still, Mr. Shayne's argument deserves weighing. I'm inclined to agree with him.

"I have no idea how I will be met, but I think the amount of money involved will be a tremendous attraction. Perhaps my appearance in the company of Mr. Shayne will alter the plan of the kidnapers slightly, but there remains the lure of one million dollars in cash. I, too, think these people will strike in spite of the presence of Mr. Shayne."

"What bothers the hell out of me, Will," Shayne took up, "is *how* they're going to hit."

"I can tell you one thing to look for," Gentry said sourly. "A guy in a floppy hat. We finally got a call from a citizen. Just this afternoon. From what she told us, I think she saw the Jacobson girl yanked from the bike in Herman Park last night."

"Well, it's about time somebody saw something," Shayne said. "Four daylight kidnapings and no one comes forward. I was beginning to think the world had gone blind."

"Our citizen says she was peddling in Herman last evening, too, says she saw a white panel truck, but from a long distance away. Says she saw this truck stop on one of the park roads, saw a guy get out

of the truck, flag down a girl cyclist. Says the guy was wearing a floppy hat, she was too far away to see more, but she remembers the hat. It must be *real* floppy.

"Anyway, she says she saw the guy and the girl wrestle a bit, then the girl was forced into the back of the truck. The witness says she was curious but she didn't want to get involved. So she peddled home —fast. Then this afternoon she heard on the radio about the kidnapings and she called us finally. How's that for a cooperative citizen? Beautiful, huh?"

Shayne ignored the Chief's sarcasm. "White truck, floppy hat," he said from deep thought. "The deafmute spot-

ted a floppy hat this morning too."

"Yeah," nodded Gentry. "Could've been the same guy."

"I'll keep a sharp eye," Shayne promised.

"Concentrate on the hat. I think we've got the truck down at the pound. We had one go on the hotsheet about mid-afternoon yesterday. A couple of alert car boys spotted it this morning in a supermarket parking lot. The kidnapers could've picked it off the street yesterday, used it to haul the kids, dumped it last night. The boys have gone over the truck once, didn't come up with any tie, but I've got a helluva strong hunch about those wheels."

Shayne nodded, looked at the ashtray the mayor had produced from a desk drawer. He stood, butted the cigarette.

"I think we should be going, Mr. Shayne," the mayor said, his voice taut. "It will be almost four o'clock by the time we reach Flamingo Park."

When they got there the park had a quiescent air about it that brilliant Wednesday afternoon. There were sun lollers and there were strollers. A busy avenue was off in the distance. Vehicles darted to and fro along the avenue like busy bugs. But the sound of motors, tires and rusted out mufflers did not reach this deep into the park.

Shayne walked loosely, head and shoulders above the mayor. He carried the million dollar suitcase in his large left hand. His coat was open, right hand free for quick movement to the .45 in the shoulder holster.

Outwardly, he looked like any man cutting through the park with a companion, heading for a distant hotel. They could have been two businessmen who had just arrived in the city and who had decided against a cab in favor of walking on a fresh afternoon.

Inwardly, the redhead was keyed, all of his senses tuned. His nerve ends were alert, his muscles flexible. And his hard gray eyes never were still. They searched the park and surrounding area, soaking up and inventorying shadows, glints, benches, people, anything that moved, anything that was still. He listened hard for the sound of swift moving feet, walking or running.

He had no idea what to expect. This could be a straight ripoff, someone pounding up to them suddenly, ripping the suitcase from his hand, then making a dash for a waiting car somewhere in the park.

Or there could be rifle shots from anywhere, with a second party snatching the suitcase as

two men lay dead or bleeding to death on the park walk.

It might be another snatch. This time out in the open. Brazen. The kidnapers—he had no idea how many to expect—could swoop in on them, threaten with guns, take them hostage, laugh at the disguised cops who had to be everywhere in the park.

And there was always the possibility the park meet was a ruse, designed only to get the mayor into the open with the money in hand. The kidnapers had to be smart enough to know there would be cops around. Perhaps their scheme was to let those in the park fidget, worry and sweat. The mayor would break eventually, become confused, agitated, perplexed. In one form or another, he'd move. He'd fold, thus drawing the cops to him.

Or he'd finally leave the park, drawing the cops after him. Either way, any kidnapers with sharp eyes would get a smell of where the mayor's protection was, the odds against them. But more important, by allowing the mayor to give way under the tension, they would draw that protection into a smaller circle, a cluster they might be able to penetrate or surround without worry about their own backsides.

The mayor said, "We're almost . . . halfway through the park, Mr. Shayne."

"Just keep walking easy. It's a helluva beautiful afternoon."

Shayne caught a glisten in the corner of his eye. He felt as if he should belt the mayor to the grass, duck. But he steeled his muscles, stopped, put the suitcase on the walk.

"What are you doing?" cried the mayor.

The redhead already was lighting the cigarette, cupping the match against the end. He was turned slightly, as if guarding the flame against the breeze, but his eyes were searching far off to their left. The eyes roamed the fourth and fifth floor apartment balconies. He felt terribly exposed.

"I've got a feeling we're being watched."

X

THERE WERE people here and there on the balconies. Most were seated, holding up books, magazines, newspapers. One or two lifted a glass. A man stood alone against the railing of a balcony at just the right spot. Mike Shayne was positive the glint had come from the man who seemed to be staring into the park.

The man lifted what had to be a metal-coated pewter container to his mouth, drank.

Sunshine glistened from the pewter.

Shayne sucked smoke deep into his lungs, exhaled. He picked up the suitcase and moved on.

"Did you see something suspicious?" the mayor asked Shayne.

The redhead fired the fresh cigarette into the grass, kept moving. He surveyed a young man and a young girl on a blanket off to their right. There was a large hat on the blanket beside the young man's right leg. The young man was kissing the young girl.

"All I see," said Shayne, "is comfortable people."

He kept the couple in the corner of his eye for as long as he could, moved on a few more yards, then glanced over his shoulder. The couple was standing, had moved off the blanket. The guy was folding the blanket. The young woman had the floppy hat clapped on her head. It was a man's hat, but on her head it looked quite feminine—in a modish sort of way. It fitted her spangled pullover half blouse, the tight, bright yellow hot pants.

The couple walked off in the opposite direction, keeping the green grass instead of concrete under their bare feet.

They could be friends, lovers or kidnapers, who were surveying. Or they could be police.

The guy moving along the walk toward Shayne and the mayor from their rear had appeared out of nowhere. When Shayne had stopped to light the cigarette and survey the apartment building, the walk had been clear. Now there was a tall thin man hustling their way. He wore faded jeans and a black and white checkered shirt. He had long unkempt hair and a drooping mustache.

He moved fast, as if with intent purpose. His face muscles were drawn, his mouth tight. He didn't look to the right or left. If he was carrying a gun, it had to be a small weapon, possibly a derringer, in his rear pocket.

Or he might be a knife man.

Shayne moved along with the mayor, keeping a steady pace that was slower than that of the man who now was moving in behind them swiftly. Shayne's ears charted the scrape and click of heels against cement. Mentally, he plotted the man's closing of the distance that separated them.

Where had the guy come from? A bench? A grassy bed? Shayne searched his memory as he brought his right hand up to allow fingers to scratch his shirt front. Those fingers were just inches from the .45 in the shoulder rig. He could have the

gun out in a flash, trigger a shot.

The thin guy passed them, moved out. Whatever his goal he was in a hurry to get to it.

"Mr. Shayne," the mayor said, "we are almost through the park."

They were approaching a curving park road that emptied into a busy street. They passed a Latin who wore the green coverall uniform of a park attendant. The Latin was using a long stick with a sharp end to stab litter that had been scattered around a park bench. He put the speared litter into a shoulder pouch. His movements were slow. Anyone who noticed him at all had to know he was merely waiting for four-thirty quitting time.

Shayne figured the Latin was one of Gentry's cops.

"Mr. Shayne?"

"This is only one area of the park, Mayor," the redhead said in a gruff voice. "We swing over to the other side from here."

There was an ancient maroon sedan braked at the beginning of the curve in the road up ahead. The hood of the sedan was up and a guy was bent over the radiator, looking deep into the well that housed the car motor. On the sidewalk, moving around idly with a bag of popcorn in hand, was a girl who was large in chest, abundant in hip and long in leg.

Dancer's legs, Shayne thought.

The thin guy who was moving along at a fast clip was forced to do a little dance around the girl. And then he was out to the sidewalk along the avenue and moving out, maintaining the swift pace.

The girl watched him, a hand reflexively feeding popcorn to her mouth. She was three-quarters turned from the detective. She looked over to the maroon sedan suddenly. "How you-all doin', Burt? Find the trouble?"

"In a minute, cat," said the guy without taking his head or hands from the interior of the motor well.

The girl had yellow hair that dangled straight and halfway down her spine. She wore a loose pink pullover top, short brown skirt and gold-brown clogs that bunched the muscles of her bare calves and made her seem two inches taller than her real height. Hooked from a shoulder was a large bag that was half-moon shaped and probably once had been a deep brown. Today it was sun bleached and showed scars.

She paid no attention to the approaching detective and mayor as she propped the popcorn sack on the edge of a

swing lid litter container and dipped a hand deep into the brown bag.

Shayne's hand moved again to his chest, but the girl withdrew a single cigarillo. She put it dead center in her lips, then searched the bag again. She brought out a packet of matches, lit the cigarillo.

"This way, mayor," Shayne said, abruptly cutting across grass in a path that would take them behind the maroon sedan. "We'll go back down the other side of the park, see how business is over there."

He'd taken in the windshield of the sedan. It was unshattered. Anyway, the car he was interested in had a white top with rust spots, according to the deaf-mute witness.

The mayor yelped suddenly, froze, disappeared from the corner of the detective's eye as if wiped out.

Shayne hadn't heard a sound. He whirled around, hand going inside his coat. Fingers gripped the butt of the .45 and then the girl said, "Freeze!"

She stood behind the mayor, a gun muzzle jammed against the nape of the mayor's neck. She stood slightly spread-legged, solid, unmoving. Her gray-green eyes held the detective.

"If that's heat you've got under that coat, buster," the girl said, voice brittle, "forget it, or His Honor is dead."

XI

MIKE SHAYNE didn't move or speak. He saw the man come around the car. The man was swarthy, had a mean face and a lightweight body. He was hood. He looked hood, he smelled hood.

"Let's go, baby!" he snapped.

Shayne saw more movement. It was inside the maroon sedan. Two heads popped up from the back seat and appeared in the rear window. One of the heads was framed in a floppy hat. The face inside the frame was young, grinning. The other guy looked worried, almost frightened.

"Move," snarled the girl. "Into the heap. Steve-baby, the redhead is wearin' heat."

The hood stepped forward, whipped a short chopping blow into Shayne's middle, and snaked the .45 from the shoulder rig. Then he took the suitcase and laughed.

The girl suddenly laughed with him. "How many more of you guys around the park, Red? The entire police force?"

Floppy Hat and the nervous man got into the front seat, the nervous man taking the wheel. The swarthy man got in beside them, Shayne's gun still in

hand. He hefted the .45, snorted. "Big heat. That makes for a big man. You know that, Varga?" The swarthy man snapped an expletive opinion.

"Get that thing out of sight!" rasped the nervous man.

The swarthy man hefted the gun again. "Tool," he growled. "That's all you gotta do. Who gives a razz about bulls now? You said it yourself, Varga: No bulls charge while we've got a gun stuck in the mayor's ear. Out of all your figurin' in this thing, I like this part the best. I gotta hand you this one. It's neat, makes us top drawer all of a sudden. Who's gonna attack?"

Between the two men, Floppy Hat laughed suddenly. "How 'bout saving the jive till later, cats? Let's split. I'm cramped." He attempted to turn and look into the back seat as the man named Varga moved the sedan into the avenue traffic, then gave up. "Who's the creep, Iris?" he asked.

"Fuzz."

Floppy Hat shook his head. "I don't think so. His armpits don't smell right—and believe me, baby-doll, I know fuzzy armpits. Two months in Gentryville and the stink sticks, yuh know?"

Shayne was jammed into a corner of the back seat, the mayor beside him. Iris was on the mayor's right, keeping the gun muzzle against the mayor's neck. She stared across the mayor's front at the detective.

"Let's see your tickets, Red," she said in the brittle voice. "Artist says you ain't a cop."

The girl's gun wrist was less than an arm length away. A

quick move, grasp, a snapping twist of her arm . . .

Shayne put down the thought. The mayor would die. The girl's finger movement would be just that fatal fraction of a second faster than his arm.

His eyes unwavering against the stare of the girl, Shayne slowly took out his wallet and flipped it open to the identification cards.

She grunted. "Be damned. Artist, those two months you was drawin' pictures for the cops wasn't all bustville. You developed a good smeller. Man, this is gonna space you out. We got us a creep named Michael Shayne. Familiar?"

Artist laughed again. "The private fuzz. Ya-hoo!"

Varga turned the sedan from the busy avenue into a quieter cross street. "For Christ's sake, will somebody take a look behind us?"

"Easy, honey," Iris said. "No sweat. We've got tails, but we figured that. It's what we want, remember? We get to the factory and they're our meat."

Shayne's mind was working fast, soaking up names and connections, and it was obvious that as long as they held a gun against the mayor's throat, these people felt confident, weren't worrying about cops. They *wanted* cops, the girl called Iris had said. Why?

Shayne scowled as he stared straight ahead, his eyes riveted on the driver's neck, a man named Varga. Varga was flinchy, and the swarthy guy had intimated all of this was Varga's operation. Somehow, that didn't fit. A leader was supposed to be cool. This one wasn't, he was the goosiest of the bunch. Floppy Hat, Artist, had the cool, the swarthy man was savage and Iris was brittle. None of them fit, that was the kicker. They weren't a unit, an organization, a gang. They were entities eons apart—and yet here they were jammed together in a plot of kidnapings and killings.

Shayne growled. They were amateurs, novices. But very damned dangerous.

"You got a problem, Red?" Iris' laugh was a cackle as the detective flashed a look at her.

Between them, the mayor sat stiff and ashen, and he breathed fast and hard.

In the front seat, Artist laughed. "All the world is a problem, baby-doll. Ain't you heard? Everywhere you look, problems. Everybody's got a problem. All the cats, all—"

"Shut up, kid," snarled the swarthy man.

Artist looked at him, silent for a moment. Then he laughed again and bent forward slightly and used fingernails to drum a

little tune against the suitcase that stood on end between the swarthy man's legs.

"But we got us a solution, huh, Pope? All that bread!"

"When we get to Mexico, kid," Pope snapped. "*When*!"

"Ain't that gonna be tonight?" Artist said, mocking surprise, taunting.

"Kid . . ." Pope growled in warning. He lifted an elbow high as if prepared to slash.

"Quit it!" Varga bleated. His voice skittered upward and he hunched another couple of inches forward over the steering wheel. "The both of you, quit it! Don't you realize—"

"All of you shut up!" Iris said flatly without moving an inch. "Everything's clicking. We've got the mayor, and we've got the green. The plane's next. We're moving. Let's keep moving."

They suddenly moved into an alley. Varga made the tires of the maroon sedan squeal and then they bounced into the alley and swung in behind an abandoned factory building. Vargo nosed the sedan into a long loading dock, rocked to a stop.

Shayne saw the blue and white car to his left. It looked five to six years old. It had a blue bottom and a white top. The windshield on the passenger side was shattered.

"Okay, out, fellas," Iris snapped. "This way."

She backed outside, moved away a couple of paces, held the gun muzzle steady on the mayor as he unfolded from the car. Shayne followed the mayor slowly, giving the police a couple more seconds to move in. He heard noises from down the alley, saw a shadow at the building corner.

Iris wiggled the gun. "Up on the dock, then inside."

The mayor had trouble navigating the height. He balanced for a moment on the dock's edge, his palms and one knee his only brace. Shayne shoved his buttocks, rolled him onto the dock platform, then leaped up, bent and caught the mayor's hand, yanked him to his feet.

Varga had already disappeared inside. Artist and Pope stood in an entry, looking out. Pope had shielded his body with a wall, held Shayne's .45 in sight. But Artist stood in full view, brazen, taunting, laughing softly.

Shayne knew Artist was a perfect target for police weapons. But no one triggered a shot. No one wanted to be responsible for the mayor's death. Artist also knew he was safe. His laughter took on tempo.

Iris was on the platform. She had hoisted herself up on her

buttocks. She swung the dancer's legs up and then stood. Her face was blank as she wiggled the gun again. "Inside."

They climbed four flights of wide, littered cement stairs. The fourth floor was cavernous, one room with narrow windows spaced evenly across the front and two ends of the building. The black wall was brick and blank except for a large, black square hole.

Shayne recognized the hole. Freight elevator doors were open, out of sight inside the brick walls. He saw nothing beyond the black gap. He knew it was open space, probably four flights of free fall.

Pope was at one of the narrow front wall windows. He had put down the suitcase, and now he stood with the wall between his body and the outside, but he was risking glances out of the window.

"The street is crawling with cops!" he rasped.

"It's what we want, man!" said Artist. He laughed, went to another window, stood in full view as he looked out. Then he twisted his head, still grinning, and said to Iris, "Show 'em the mayor, cat—before I get shot."

She moved the mayor to a window, forced him to stand looking out.

For a flicker of a second, Shayne tensed to dive. He figured he could slash the girl from the side before she could get the gun around, knock her sprawling. She could lose the gun in the spill. But even if she didn't, he'd be on her with a pounce, wrench the gun from her hand, roll and cut down Pope.

But Pope was turned from the window now, the .45 held steady on the detective's middle, his face screwed down, the mouth tight, the eyes blank and hard.

Shayne didn't move a muscle.

"Donald-baby," said Iris in a flat tone. "Tell 'em what we want."

Varga skittered to a deep wall-floor shadow and brought up a bullhorn. He seemed to stand in indecision for a moment, and then he went to one of the windows and smashed the horn against the glass, making an opening. He attempted to say something through the horn, but his voice broke.

Artist yanked the horn from his hands. He stood at the opening. "You have one hour," he said in the horn. "We want a plane, a six-passenger at International. And have it gassed and ready to go. No bargains. Plane, one hour—or the mayor is dead!"

He threw the horn across the vast room. It clattered and scraped across concrete for a

few seconds and then there was silence. He looked around. No one said anything.

Abruptly, Artist laughed. "Well, did I do okay? It's what we want, isn't it? Varga-baby is gonna fly us to Mexico, isn't he?"

Varga and Iris remained silent. Pope said, "You did good, kid."

Shayne analyzed. He had it now. Varga probably was a licensed, small craft pilot. They figured on flying across the Gulf, putting down in Mexico, probably on some deserted strip, splitting the loot and scattering.

None of these people were going to stick together. Varga and Iris maybe. For a short time, until she got her hooks into his share of the take. Then she'd cut on her own. Artist and Pope would be long gone, of course. In separate directions. Unless Pope . . . Pope was the truly dangerous one of the four. He was a tough. A hood, a punk. Until now, he probably had been a gas station stickup gnat, maybe a liquor store here and there. A loner. Self-styled. But a nickel and dimer all the way. No big scores until Varga had come along with a million dollar caper.

Varga was difficult to figure. Raw amateur. He was far out

of his realm. Too far. But he was there. The drive was a mystery. Varga, basically, was straight, should be a nine-to-fiver. With or without an Iris.

On the other hand, he was the schemer. The kidnapings, the demand, the escape all belonged to Varga. Without him, Iris, Pope, Artist—had this kid truly once been on the city payroll as an artist in the police department?—would still be doing their things for pennies.

"M-Mr. Shayne?"

The mayor had a frog in his throat, a gun muzzle pressed against the outside. Shayne knew that every time the mayor sucked a breath he figured it might be his last.

He also knew the mayor was not going to be killed here. That was to come later. Along with his own death. They could be dumped from an aircraft into the Gulf of Mexico, or they could be shot down on desolate Mexican soil. Either way, they were to die.

Like the four kids? The police had two bodies. But where were the girls? He had expected to see them trussed and terrified in some corner of this floor. But there was nothing. Only vast space, concrete and dusky shadows.

Shayne said, "Maybe you won't get a plane." He looked straight at Pope as he spoke.

The hood lifted the .45 slightly, tensed. But it was Iris who wavered. She turned slightly from the mayor. The movement took the gun muzzle from the mayor's throat. Shayne leaped.

THE DETECTIVE took two huge steps toward Iris and launched himself into a flat, swimmer's racing dive. Sound numbed his eardrums, crashed around him. Something tugged lightly across his shoulder blades.

In that fraction of a second he knew Pope had triggered a shot from the .45 and that the slug had ripped a path across his coat. The sound was too loud for the gun Iris held.

His outstretched hands rammed the girl's middle. She yelped. Another slug ricocheted off the concrete floor under Shayne just an instant before he landed flat and skidded. He rolled, pulled his legs up, came up on his knees.

Iris was off to his left now. She had crashed into a wall, was sinking to the floor. The .32 was gone from her hand. He saw it on the floor, but there was no chance in hell he'd reach it before Pope filled him with bullet holes.

He whirled on his knees as Pope fired another shot. The slug took the detective's hat off.

Shayne leaped to his feet, dodged to the left, then to the right, crouched, ran straight toward Pope who was bringing the .45 down level again.

The mayor yelled. He took a couple of steps, stopped, threw his hands high as Pope spun. Pope triggered another shot. The mayor squealed and went into a crazy spin, legs buckling quickly. He went down to the floor and writhed, groaning.

Shayne saw blood spreading from the mayor as he launched a long looping blow with his right arm. His fist crashed against Pope's ear and sent Pope reeling away. Pope went off balance down the length of the vast room, but he didn't go to his knees, and he didn't lose the .45.

He finally caught himself, whirled and fired a wild shot. Shayne already was moving, diving for the gun lost by Iris. She was on her hands and knees, shaking her head groggily as she crawled to the gun.

Shayne leaped over her, caught her with an arm and yanked her against his front as he went down. The slug from the .45 opened her front and spilled a warm liquid on the detective's arm and hand. He knew Iris had died instantly.

The slight seemed to freeze Pope for an instant, and Shayne used that second to stretch out a long arm and snake in the .32. He triggered a shot, made Pope dance.

Then Pope leaped to Varga, who was cowering against the front wall. He yanked Varga around and used him as a body shield, brought the .45 up.

Shayne fired a shot into the brick above Pope's head. Pope kept moving forward, the .45 poised. Then Varga broke. He was a terrified man. He shot an elbow into Pope's middle and bent forward. The move exposed Pope's face. Shayne fired again. Pope yanked his head, yowled a curse. Shayne saw blood spurt from Pope's ear.

Varga squirmed, dug deep with his elbows and slashed with his feet. Pope was forced to free him. He gave Varga a violent shove toward the detective as Shayne rolled from the girl and up on his knees again.

He was in front of the open black gap of the elevator shaft. He brought the .32 up, but steeled his trigger finger. Varga was totally exposed, could be cut down in an instant. But Varga also was out of control, reeling, and in no sense an attacker as he plunged forward.

Then there was another crash of sound from the .45 and Varga became spread-eagled in flight, his face muscles caught in surprised horror. A piece of

his skull and hair sailed upward from his head as if it were an expertly tossed frisbee seeking a wind updraft.

Varga crashed down on Shayne, spilling the detective. He suddenly was on his back, and he felt terribly exposed again. He arched his head back, brought his arm over his head, the .32 upside down. He had a glimpse of Pope. The .45 was angled down. Shayne fired.

Pope howled and rolled out of sight. Shayne heard the clatter. He kicked and shoved the dead Varga from his body, flipped over to his belly. Pope was doubled, howling and cursing, the .45 gone from his hand. Shayne saw the gun on the floor ten to twelve feet away from Pope.

It was his opportunity. He scrambled to his knees, moving forward at the same time. If he could get to the .45, all of this was finished.

The movement in the corner of his eye made him bring an arm up reflexively. He had forgotten Artist. But the kid was flying in now, lunging toward him. Shayne ducked a shoulder and then brought it up fast. The shoulder plunged into the youth's middle. He heaved upward.

Artist went over him with a yelp. Shayne whirled on his knee, saw Artist land on his spine and bounce. He skidded into the black wall gap. There was an instant of silence and then a long, terrified scream as Artist plunged down the four floors of open shaft.

Shayne heard Pope scrambling. The odds had evened. He was one and one with the hood now. Actually, he was slightly up. He had the .32 in hand while Pope was diving for the .45.

Shayne came around from the black wall gap, jaw thrust, face muscles ticcing, gray eyes icy. Iris' blood had slicked his front and left arm.

He wouldn't kill Pope. He wasn't a wanton killer. But he might have to shatter an ankle with a slug from the .32. Pope had to be put out of action before he could sweep up the .45 again.

Pope's lunge surprised the detective. Instead of going for the .45, Pope had launched himself in a dive straight at the .32. His face was contorted, one ear was bloody. His yell was loud, and palms at the end of stiff arms loomed large. Shayne was too late with the .32. He triggered a shot but the slug sailed under the flying Pope.

Then Pope's palms smashed the detective's shoulders and Shayne went backward off-balance. He was out of control

for just an instant. But that instant was long enough to be fatal. He knew he was going into the black gap. Somewhere he lost the .32. He clawed air reflexively.

And then he was going down, down, down.

XIII

THE FREE FALL was a strange sensation, and Mike Shayne was surprised that he still had his wits, that thoughts tumbled one after another through his skull. He had thought a man plunging helplessly through black space with no chance for survival might blank out.

The clawing fingers of his right hand hooked into something. His body continued to plunge. And then suddenly there was a tremendous yank against his arm as his feet swung under him. The jerk strained his arm and the hooked fingers, but the realization that he somehow had briefly stopped the free fall flooded him with new strength from an unknown source. He kept the fingers hooked as he yelled against the shots of pain that splayed down the length of his arm and into his massive shoulder.

Abruptly, he was swaying in space. He clung desperately, continued to sway. He wanted to stop the motion of his body, but he had no control as he moved back and forth across the width of the dark shaft. He knew he was hanging by the one hand, that the strength of his arm and the hook of his fingers were his lone salvation.

His body weight pulled at his arm and finers, and he knew that in another few seconds that weight was to win the tug-of-war with the arm and fingers. But he forced himself to remain calm, wait until the momentum of the swaying diminished.

The pain had moved from his shoulder into his spine now, dancing down his vertebrae like a child punishing stairsteps. He couldn't hang on with the one hand much longer. The strain was too much.

The arc of his sway had lessened. He lifted his left hand, searching. The fingers found nothing. He ran the fingers along his strained right arm to the wrist, then stretched the fingers. They made contact with something. He tested the texture and knew he had found some kind of rope. He hooked his fingers through holes. Now he dangled from both hands. Guessing, he figured he was clutching heavy netting.

Netting dangling in an empty elevator shaft? He shook his head against the enormity

of the probability of survival.

Tentatively, he loosed the fingers of his right hand, relieving the strain against that arm, shifting it to the left. The relief was brief. The fingers of his left hand seemed to be sliding, coming unhooked. It was as if they were greased.

Iris' blood! It had made the fingers slick! He put all of the weight and strain back on his right arm as he freed his left hand and swiped it across the seat of his trousers. He regripped with both hands. The slickness was gone.

He glanced down. His eyes had become adjusted, and instead of blackness there was a shadowed dimness now. He could make out the walls of the shaft and down below there was a square patch of light on concrete. Sprawled in that patch was a body, a floppy hat off to the left.

It was at least three-and-a-half floors down to the dead Artist.

Shayne strained his neck and looked up. He saw another square of light to his right, maybe a half floor up. He knew it was the opening from the fourth floor of the building. He saw Pope framed in that opening.

Pope was on his hands and knees, unmoving, one of the guns gripped in his right hand. Two large, strange looking bulks dangled between the detective and Pope. They were just a few feet above Shayne and they swayed slightly.

He blinked hard against the bulks, his mind working, searching. A possibility flared, and he seemed to find new strength for his arms with the thought. He pulled himself up slightly, searched with his feet. Something dangled against his legs, but escaped his shoes.

He used his right shoe against the heel of his left. The left shoe dropped, clunked far below. He toed off the right shoe, again heard the clunk. He attempted to find a toehold, but couldn't quite get the grip.

Dangling from his left hand, he used his right to peel off socks and drop them, then his toes hooked into netting and he transferred the tremendous strain from his arms to his powerful legs.

He swayed in the monkey position, remembering the morgue report on the death of the Caulkins boy to Gentry. Rope fibers on young Caulkins clothing. A fishy smell. He could be dangling from a fish net. Above him could be two kidnaped girls jailed in fish nets.

His mind worked. Kidnapings, the victims brought to an empty factory building where

stolen fish nets had been rigged in an empty elevator shaft. Put the kids in the nets, shove them out into space where they'd dangle. Kids out of sight. No chance for escape.

Except among young Caulkins' interests was gymnastics. And he could have been carrying a pocket knife. He could have sliced open the netting, turned to his prowess. He could have attempted to swing himself up into the opening above, missed and plunged to his death.

Shayne used his hands and toes to inch up the sliced netting. There were darker lumps inside the netting above him. One of the lumps did not stir. The other became the figure of a girl, hunched in a fetal position, feet free, but hands out of sight behind her and mouth taped. Shayne figured more tape held her wrists. The girl's face took shape. He could see wide open, unblinking eyes above the slash of mouth tape, and the girl wiggled in the netting.

"Shayne!"

The shout from Pope made the detective freeze.

Pope was pointing the muzzle of the gun at a downward angle. Shayne waited for the splat of slug against his forehead. Then Pope laughed suddenly and stood. He looked huge in the gap of the opening.

"How much longer can you hang on, man?"

Pope laughed again and dug into the walls. He pulled the elevator doors together and shut off the light.

Shayne struggled upward for a few seconds while his eyes gradually re-adjusted to the new darkness. He risked a look down. The patch of light and the body were still down there.

Something bumped him lightly. He stared at the swaying lump. The girl in the fish net seemed to be attempting to tell him something with her eyes.

He croaked, "Hang easy, kid. The only way to go is up!"

Logic was his only salvation now. Down was certain death. And the sides of the shaft were closed. His single chance was up. The nets dangled. They had to dangle from something. From an old elevator housing. From I-beams. From hooks. From *something*. And maybe there was a door, an opening of some kind up there. Elevators had to be serviced from the top too . . .

He summoned strength and went up, fingers and toes working. He finally caught iron in his right hand, tested it. The iron was shaped into a hook and several strands of rope were bunched on the hook. He

went on up, hand over hand, until he was able to plant his right foot in the hook.

He lengthened his body and sucked in a deep breath. The foot already was numbing. He looked up. There was a three-sided line of dim light. Maybe a trap door, hinged on the fourth side. He grasped the single thick strand of rope and hoisted his body. The top of his skull slammed against steel.

He dropped slightly, shook himself against the numbing sensation, then looped his right arm up over the I-beam. He slowly pulled the length of his body up and stretched out on the narrow surface of the beam, gasping for breath.

Slowly, he pushed himself up into a sitting position, his legs dangling in free space, his fingers gripping the edge of the I-beam as he precariously balanced his weight. He eased back his head, looked up.

The trap door was there, just inches above his head. He lifted his right arm slowly, testing the door. It moved, let in light. He let the door down in a moment of relief, and then shoved it open in a sudden surge of strength that accompanied the victory.

He reached up, grasped the edges of the opening and heaved himself out on to the roof, where he stumbled and fell. When he rolled on to his back and looked up, he was staring straight into the muzzle of his .45. It was held by the hood named Pope.

But all Pope did was gasp and suddenly throw his arms wide. The .45 disappeared. And then Pope seemed to go up on his toes, pause momentarily, and then crash down, smothering the detective.

The sound of the gunshot followed him.

Shayne heaved with palms and knees, flipped Pope from his body. He sat up fast. He was surrounded by silent and unmoving men. All were staring at him as if they had never seen a bloodied, bruised, barefooted, stretched man in tattered clothing.

Len Sturgis came into view. He carried a gun. He squatted beside Pope, who was leaking blood from his ear, wrist and the back of his left leg. Sturgis looked at Shayne head on. "You okay?"

"I'll live," growled the detective.

"This one too," said Sturgis. "A few holes in him, but he isn't going to die."

Shayne leaped to his feet. "You find the mayor?"

Sturgis nodded. "Gentry is with him. He has a nasty shoulder wound and a few days in the hospital will put him be-

hind his desk as good as new."

"There's two kids down this shaft," said the redhead, looking down into the darkness. "In fish nets. They—"

"The boys are already on it," interrupted Sturgis. "We found the elevator doors. We'll fish them out. You ready to go someplace and clean up a bit? Man, you're a mess!"

Two hours later, Shayne, Sturgis and Gentry sat in the police chief's office. They had it all pieced together now. Pope had talked, filling in the gaps. They had the plot, and they knew how the two boys had died. Both by accident: Littrel by a too-heavy blow, Caulkins in an escape attempt, as Shayne had figured it.

"So if it's done, how come I'm sitting here?" growled Shayne. He was fatigued and grouchy.

Gentry snapped a hard look at him, then snorted and reached into a filing cabinet drawer behind him, brought out a new bottle of Hennessey's, put it on his desk.

"A little tonic for the nerve ends, Mike?"

Shayne grinned suddenly. The world already looked brighter.

In the Next Issue and Exclusively Yours—

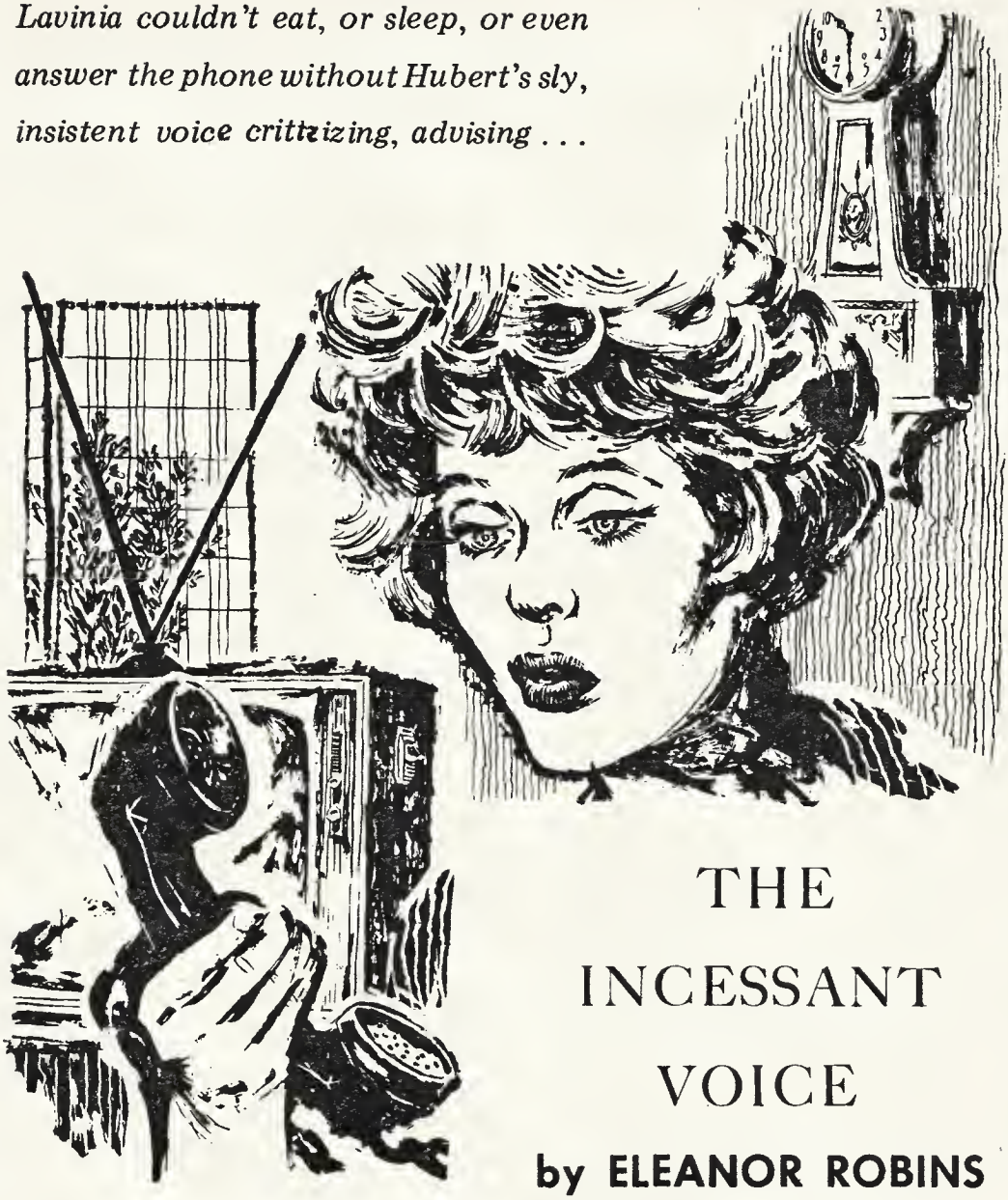
THE CASUAL KILLERS

Shayne took the first bullet lying down. He was fishing from a grassy bank when it took the hat from his head. But the redheaded Miami private eye is hardly the man to play a sitting duck role for long—especially when every motorcycle mobster in Dade County is out to collect a twenty grand contract laid on him by a person unknown.

A Complete Mike Shayne Short Novel

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Lavinia couldn't eat, or sleep, or even answer the phone without Hubert's sly, insistent voice crittizing, advising . . .



THE INCESSANT VOICE

by ELEANOR ROBINS

HUBERT TALKED constantly. His voice was the first one Lavinia heard when she was jolted awake in the morning and the last one she heard as she drifted off to sleep at night. Frequently Lavinia felt she'd scream if she heard Hubert utter another word.

She'd tried going into a dis-

tant room to get away from him, and once she'd even stuffed cotton in her ears, but all to no avail. As much as she hated Hubert's chattering, she couldn't bear the suspense of not knowing what he was saying. At times, though, she wished she had the strength to destroy him.

In retrospect Lavinia wondered why she'd been foolish enough to share her home with Hubert and why she'd ever referred to him affectionately as Dear Hubert. She'd been happy living alone, but she hadn't realized it until after Hubert arrived.

Before Hubert dominated her life, Lavinia had enjoyed the companionship of devoted friends, few though they were. But her devotion to Hubert had driven them away. She'd doted on his every word and expression. She'd been so eager to extoll his virtues that she'd bored her friends with lavish praise of the new addition to her life.

When they visited in her home, Lavinia found it difficult to concentrate on what they were saying because her attention was torn between them and Hubert's loud voice. If her friends tried to convey the latest community gossip to her, Hubert almost always butted in with news of a more shocking nature.

Finally Lavinia's friends became disgusted with Hubert's domineering intrusions into their conversations—their visits abruptly ceased.

Lavinia had been thrilled over the prospect of spending every afternoon alone with Hubert. She'd been enthralled both by his never-ending problems and his many inept attempts to solve them. Lavinia realized he never got one problem solved before he had another to agonize over. Eventually Lavinia had become both bored and irritated, and it was then that she realized how much the loss of her friends meant to her.

Gradually Hubert made Lavinia feel she was a very dull-witted person. Until he entered her life, Lavinia had considered herself an intelligent and knowledgeable person. She'd envisioned herself as a dedicated citizen who concerned herself with current events.

She'd enjoyed listening to the President because she pretended he was speaking only to her. But she could no longer relish even that small pleasure. Hubert had ruined it for her. He pounced on the President's every inflection and expression, and he gave Lavinia an explanation and instant analysis of every word the President spoke as though she were too stupid

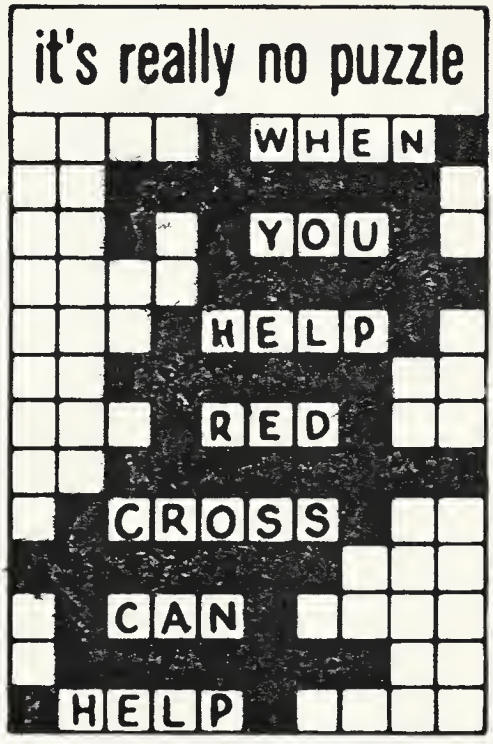
to comprehend without his help.

Hubert delighted in telling Lavinia not only how to prepare her meals but also what items to cook. At Hubert's insistence she'd bought the most expensive foods at the grocery store. Foods she'd never even thought of buying before. Hubert persisted in mentioning food until she felt compelled to go into the kitchen.

Sometimes she could prepare a meal in only a few minutes, but at other times Hubert's suggested menus required an hour or more to cook. But no matter how much or how little time Lavinia spent preparing the meal, Hubert always spoiled it for her.

He waited until she had the first bite almost to her mouth, and then he ruined her appetite by describing a fiery accident on the interstate or an explosion at a chemical plant. She was certain Hubert deliberately saved the gory details until it was her mealtime. Finally Lavinia stopped preparing elaborate meals, and it wasn't long before she quit noticing how loosely her frayed and dingy clothing hung on her shriveled body.

Lavinia was no longer the impeccable dresser and immaculate housekeeper she'd once been. That also was



Hubert's fault. Whenever she'd started to wash her clothes with her dependable detergent or to shine the furniture with her favorite polish or to scour the floors with her special cleanser, Hubert's shrilly voice told her there was a better brand to use.

Hubert always knew a better method of doing everything, so soon Lavinia quit trying to do anything.

She just sat in her chair and rocked and rocked and rocked with her pale blue eyes fixed on Hubert as though mesmerized by his voice.

Unkempt wisps of gray hair fell over Lavinia's wizened face,

as an overpowering hatred for Hubert began to mount within her and demand satisfaction. Her glassy eyes darted from Hubert to the dusty furniture to the filthy floor and finally to the fireplace. Her eyes became riveted on the fire set.

The deadly poker seemed to beckon to her, and she had a compelling urge to seize it.

She struggled to raise herself out of the rocker, and she slowly dragged her weak legs to the fireplace. She reached out her scrawny arms, and her bony hands grasped the poker. The anticipation caused her heart to pound rapidly against her chest, and her breath came in raspy gasps as the strength surged into her skinny legs. She hastened to Hubert before she lost her nerve.

Ecstasy covered Lavinia's face as she bashed Hubert repeatedly with the heavy poker. He offered no resistance, but the exertion was too much for Lavinia.

With the poker still clutched in her hands, she stumbled back to the rocker and collapsed into the security of its bosom while still gasping for breath.

Her chest heaved one final sigh, and then Lavinia was forever still.

Several days elapsed before Lavinia's worried neighbors summoned the police to investigate the silence emanating from her house. The uniformed officers forced open the front door and then halted in puzzled amazement when they saw Lavinia slumped in her rocker with the poker still clutched in her hands.

There was a satisfied smile fixed on her withered face, and her lifeless eyes stared vacantly at the battered television set.

In the Next Issue:

GOING HOME

by M. R. GRANBECK

For a driver to pick up a hitchhiker after dark is always dangerous business. But it is not always the driver who runs the bigger risk. The hiker is also taking a chance.

THE DEVIL AND CARLO GAMBINO

An Authentic TRUE CRIME Feature

by DAVID MAZROFF

THE GODFATHER of the Mafia, Carlo Gambino, arrived in this country as a stowaway on an Italian freighter. When the ship docked in Norfolk, Virginia, he dashed from it in the middle of the night and made his way to friends who were awaiting him.

At the time, he was twenty-one years old, a heavy-set young man, five feet seven inches tall and weighing two hundred pounds.

He was only one of many men who came to this country from Italy and Sicily, some through Canada and Mexico, others by way of New Orleans, and still others as he had come, through various ports of coastal cities in America, all of them filtering in to be enlisted in the different mobs as musclemen.

There was nothing about Carlo Gambino in December, 1921 that justified the premise that one day he would become the most powerful man in the underworld. Just off the boat, he was uncouth, uneducated, and lacked the kind of organi-

From stowaway to Godfather of the Mafia, Carlo Gambino's rise to black fame in the dread annals of Organized Crime followed a trail of terror and death. Long after his blood buddies were laid in their well-deserved graves, Gambino lives on; a monument to shrewd survival in a world of his own ungodly making!

zational ability of a Johnny Torrio, Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, or Lepke Buchalter.

He did possess an uncanny shrewdness, innate intelligence, and a demeanor so benign as to give him the appearance of being an innocent in a jungle of foxes and wolves. His appearance fooled many men: He was hard as carbonized steel underneath.

Gambino's first job was as a warehouse worker for a trucking firm operated by his first cousins, Paul and Pete Castellano. In the custom of many of the Italian and Sicilian members of the mobs, Gambino married Vincenza Castellano, sister of Paul and Pete.

The marriage gave him a little clout in the organization. He was aided in his climb up the ladder, a little at a time, not only by the Castellanos but by many of their associates because he was in the family.

He earned a reputation quickly for efficiency in the many different tasks he was assigned, some of which required muscle and others merely persuasion. He was soft-voiced, gentle in his approach.

"There are so many young hoodlums around," he would say to a store owner. "They break windows in the stores, steal merchandise right under your nose, drop those nasty stink bombs, yes? Ah, but we will protect you from all that. We pass the word to these young hoodlums that it would be bad for them to molest you."

The proprietor of the store got the idea, however soft Gambino's voice. If the price Gambino asked was a little too high to pay then he was not above negotiating and coming to terms. However, an outright refusal to pay tribute resulted in immediate violence.

That was his way, and only the most foolhardy learned by experience that Gambino's gentle approach was not a sign of weakness, but a mere prelude to destruction of business and person.

Gambino came to the attention of Lucky Luciano at a time when Luciano was plotting the murder of Joe "The Boss" Masseria in order to take over control of the mob. Luciano sent for Gambino and made him a member of the family.

Thus Gambino came into contact with many of the hoods who were to rise high in the hierarchy of the Organization, as it was often referred to by various members of the crime cartel. Among them were Meyer Lansky, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, Frank Costello, Joe Adonis, and the two

bosses of Murder, Incorporated, Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro.

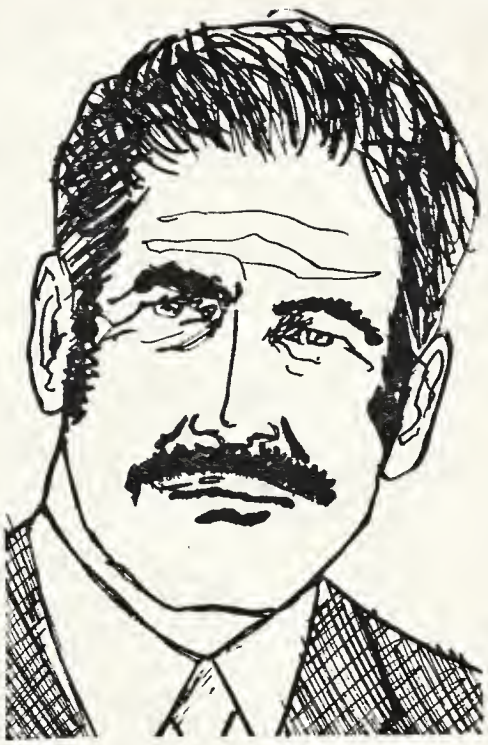
Gambino watched, listened, and learned.

During the gang wars between Joe "The Boss" Masseria and his arch rival Salvatore Maranzano, Gambino was the least known of all the "soldiers" in the Masseria camp. This inconspicuousness was a matter of choice.

Gambino followed orders, concentrated on his own little rackets, prudently saved his money so that he might invest in bigger legal and illegal enterprises. But more than anything else in his plan to achieve a higher place in the scheme of the Organization, he avoided friction with everyone. When Joe "The Boss" Masseria was murdered and Luciano took over the mob he called Gambino in for a talk.

"Carlo, I have been following your operations for some time now. I know all about your three handbooks." Luciano shrugged. "Small time, true, but it tells me you know how to do things. I know, too, that you have been peddling moonshine liquor that you buy for five dollars a gallon and sell for twenty to about two or three dozen private customers, a sort of house to house deal."

Luciano nodded. "That's



CARLO GAMBINO

pretty smart. No payoffs to anybody, just a nice neat profit of maybe a grand or two a month, right? Well, you can keep all those little rackets you've got. You're not interfering with any of the Organization's operations, which means you're not stepping on anybody's toes. However, you're a loner in all this. If anyone wanted to muscle in on you for a piece of the action you would have no comeback. You couldn't come to me because what you're doing is strictly a personal business. So, I'm going to consolidate all of it into the Organization. I'm

going to add to what you've got."

Gambino bowed in a respectful gesture. "I am grateful, Don Salvatore."

"I would prefer you address me as Charles."

Gambino bowed again. "As you wish, Don Charles."

"I have spoken to Joe Adonis about your handbooks. He controls that end of it for the Organization. He has agreed to put in the wire service in your three handbooks and bankroll the action. In this way you can take any size wager that may come in. Your split with Joey A. will be thirty per cent of the net. The Organization will take seventy per cent. For that you get the wire service, the bankrolling, and full protection."

Gambino bowed again. "It is most fair, Don Charles."

"Good. The whiskey business is all yours. We are not concerned with that. Furthermore, I have it on the strongest information that the Prohibition Act will be repealed. Keep that in mind."

"Yes, I will."

"Good. That is all for now. I appreciate that you have been loyal and this is my way of rewarding you. That is all."

GAMBINO THOUGHT a great deal of what Luciano had told him. If, as Luciano said, this Prohibition would be repealed and liquor would be sold legally, then surely the price for a bottle of whiskey would be much higher than what he could offer. Since moonshine whiskey cost him only a dollar a quart he could sell it for three dollars a quart and still make money as well as beat the price of legal stuff—and that was very much okay with Carlo Gambini.

Repeal did come in and the Organization went out of the business of illegal liquor. Gambino went out quietly buying up all the stills he could and went into manufacturing moonshine on a wholesale scale. He had appraised the situation accurately. Taxes on legal liquor were high. Those who had grown accustomed to drinking moonshine preferred it to the legal whiskey which they said was no better and certainly a great deal more expensive.

Gambino became the biggest moonshiner in the country. He had large stills in Brooklyn, the Catskills, Long Island, New Jersey, and in the hills of Pennsylvania, and in Maryland. Despite the vastness of the operation he kept a close control. He had learned the intricacies of organization from the masters of it in the underworld.

He operated his stills for almost six years before the Inter-

nal Revenue agents caught up with him. He was arrested and charged with running a million gallon a year still in Pennsylvania. He was duly convicted, and on May 29, 1939, he was sentenced to a term of twenty-two months in the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary. It was his only prison term.

When he was released, World War II had begun. With the war in full swing, rationing became a law. Everything was scarce. Ration stamps were necessary for shoes, gasoline, meat, and other goods essential to the war effort. There already was a black market. Making huge profits.

Gambino talked with his brother Paola.

"This black market business, Paola, it is big money. Have you looked into it?"

"Yes. It is big, and it is simple to take."

"Take?"

"Yes. The ration stamps are distributed by agencies. But I have learned that in Michigan, in Detroit, Grand Rapids and other cities there, the stamps are distributed from schools. Poof! They are kept in plain office desks. We will get a good burglar to break into these schools, take the stamps and deliver them to us."

"Someone we can trust, eh?"

"Of course. We will make it worthwhile for him to be trusted. That—or else."

"Yes, that is good. Set it up."

There was one other thing that took Gambino's interest at this time. Luciano was in prison. Although he continued to wield a great deal of influence from his prison cell, he was not able to hinder the grasping for power on the part of Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia, Frank and Joe Scalise, and a few other up and coming young hoods. Genovese was particularly in the forefront for the role of *capo di tutti capi*—boss of all bosses.

At the moment, however, Gambino gave his attention to the matter of the ration stamps. Gambino brought Sam Accardi, a New Jersey gangster, who later was deported to Italy, into the plan.

Accardi knew several professional burglars. He talked two of them into accompanying him to Detroit, where they looked the situation over and found it exactly as Paola had said.

Schools in Detroit and several other surrounding cities were raided and hundreds of thousands of ration stamps for gasoline, meat, shoes, and other products were taken. Back in New York, Accardi and the two burglars broke into the Office of Price Administration offices in New York and New Jersey.

Their haul in both areas were in the hundreds of thousands again. The government then put these stamps in banks but the damage largely had been done.

Gambino got rich.

He then penetrated legitimate businesses on a broad scale. The Castellanos had gone into the wholesale and retail meat business and many of the meat stamps were distributed through them. It was a case of keeping it all in the family.

Gambino brought his skills into garment factories, supermarkets, parking lots, pizza parlors, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, vending machine companies, garbage hauling, real estate, and construction firms. He hired the best brains for each of these business ventures, and through a clever corporation lawyer set up a parent organization and holding companies. He had a strong hold on many union locals and used his influence there to abet his legal and semi-legal or semi-lawful activities.

In order to hold a strong hand on the various unions he opened up an office of labor consultants under the name of SGS ASSOCIATES. The *G* stood for Gambino. His partners were Henry Saltzstein, an ex-con, a convicted burglar, probably one of the men involved in the ration stamp burglaries, and George Schiller, of whom little is known in underworld circles.

SGS ASSOCIATES was one of the most successful firms in labor relations. Word got around that anyone engaging SGS would never have any labor problems. Among their clients were the Concord Hotel in the Catskills, Howard Clothes, and the real estate firm of Wellington Associates which owned the Chrysler Building.

Gambino also expanded his illegal activities on broad fronts which included gambling, loan-sharking, hijacking, narcotics, and other nefarious deals and dodges. Despite the fact that Gambino had entered this country illegally, he made a trip to Palermo, Sicily, in 1948, where he met with Lucky Luciano to discuss the narcotics traffic. It was a memorable meeting.

Luciano said, "Carlo, I have never forgotten your loyalty to me and so I will give you complete control of all the white stuff that will come from here for delivery to the United States."

Gambino bowed. "I appreciate it, Don Charles. You may depend on me. I shall follow your advice and orders."

"Yes, yes, I know. Now, there

are many men here and in Italy who wish to go to the United States. They will be smuggled aboard freighters and passenger liners. They will carry the white stuff and deliver it to you as payment for their passage. You will make some arrangements to see to it that these men are taken care of in some way. You may be able to use some of them yourself or obtain some sort of positions for them with others of our friends."

Gambino nodded. "It will be taken care of."

"Good. I am told you have been very successful, that you have many enterprises going for you. No trouble with anyone?"

"None. I leave them alone, they leave me alone."

"That is good. Very well, Carlos. You will receive word from me each time there is to be a shipment. It will come to you through various sources. It was good seeing you again, Carlos. Good day."

The FBI learned that Luciano was involved in the smuggling of heroin. The Bureau forwarded its information to the Bureau of Narcotics and that department put some of its best agents to work on the case.

It was discovered that about forty Sicilian aliens had been smuggled aboard the *SS Pamorus* which docked at the Port of Philadelphia in May, 1948. The Bureau of Narcotics also learned that Gambino was the contact but didn't have enough evidence to bring Gambino into court. He was too smart to leave himself open to any charge of smuggling or possession. Everything was handled through several parties until, when the stuff finally reached him, no one could say for sure that the heroin had actually been delivered to him.

GAMBINO'S FRIENDSHIP with Luciano and his control of a great deal of the narcotics trade did not set too well with Vito Genovese. He believed that he had an "in" with Luciano and that Charlie Lucky would throw all the business his way. The truth of the matter is that Luciano didn't like Genovese.

This dislike went back to the days when Genovese broke with Meyer Lansky, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello, and Willie Moretti. Genovese had taken Albert Anastasia with him at the time and formed his own family. He stepped on toes at every turn.

Now, he was being paid back in the coin of the realm. He wasn't one to take it lying down. He schemed how to take over from Gambino. What he

didn't know, or forgot, was that Gambino was a deeper plotter and that his intrigue and tactics made Genovese look like a rank amateur at the business.

Gambino was an enigma in some ways. Like the Godfather made famous by Marlon Brando, Gambino liked to play the role of the kindly benefactor. Though he was neck deep in the importation and distribution of heroin that found its way to teen-agers of both sexes and turned many of them into thieves and prostitutes in order to support the habit, he made a grand gesture.

The owner of a candy store in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn was selling drugs to young high school students. Many of these had become main-line addicts. Many of the parents complained to the police but nothing came of it. One anxious and deeply disturbed mother of a teen-aged son appealed to Gambino.

"Don Carlos, I beg you, my son is on heroin. He is going to get into very serious trouble unless something can be done. I am going crazy because of it. Please help me."

"Where does he get it?" Gambino asked.

"From a candy store on Myrtle Avenue. The police have done nothing to put this man out of business. He is ruining many young lives. Please, Don Carlos, help us."

Gambino nodded. "Go home, dear woman. I will take care of it. You have my promise."

The woman grasped Gambino's hand and kissed the back of it, bowed and went out, her heart easier.

The candy store was closed the next day and the owner had disappeared from the neighborhood. He was never heard from again. No one in the neighborhood knew what had happened to him.

The mother of the boy expressed her thanks to Don Carlo to everyone in the neighborhood. "God bless Don Carlo," she said. "he saved our children."

Gambino reveled in the role of the Godfather. It was, more or less, the traditional role of the Mafia man of respect. He was the one who settled many disputes, the benefactor of his people, bringing husband and wife together who were on the verge of separation or divorce, delivering food to the needy, staving off evictions, using his influence to save a boy or girl from prison and threatening them with harsh reprisals if they stepped out of line again.

He would find jobs for the unemployed, assisting those who needed money and then forgiving the loan. In this way

he earned the gratitude and loyalty of hundreds of his countrymen.

Carlos Gambino played this dual role of destroyer and savior with ease. He gave off an aura of respectability and gentleness that earned him the respect of all the people in the neighborhood. He was a devoted husband and father, stayed clear of the nightspots and the gaudy saloons, and lived for forty years in the same neat, two-story brick house at 2230 Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn.

He also had a hundred-thousand dollar waterview ranch house at 34 Club Drive in Massapequa, Long Island, where he and his wife would host gatherings of fifty or more Mafioso and their wives on holiday occasions such as Fourth of July or Labor Day in which outdoor barbecues were the feature of the day. Like the Godfather in the movie, Gambino loved to putter in the garden, where he grew flowers and his favorite Italian tomatoes.

It was in this sumptuous home that he also entertained his lieutenant, Aniello Dellacroce. Here, too, he issued his orders to members of his *family*, the score or more of underbosses who ruled the soldiers in the organization, the thieves, dope peddlers, hijackers, the loan sharks, and the killers. He was, and is, the Godfather, merciful and merciless, the epitome of a pseudo grace and the devil incarnate of all that is evil.

While Vito Genovese was plotting to take over as boss of bosses, Carlo Gambino was building fences, security barriers that would in time thwart Genovese. Among the men Gambino courted and won over to his side was Thomas Marino known also as "Toddo" to his friends.

He was at the time the kingpin of Brooklyn's underworld. A tall, six foot one inch, handsome figure of a man who dressed impeccably in subdued blues and greys, he was brought to the United States by his parents when he was four years old in 1907. In 1917, he was mixed up with a young gang of burglars, was busted on a job, convicted and sentenced to eighteen months in the reformatory. It was the only time he saw the inside of a prison cell.

Toddo's break came in 1930. He met Little Augie Pisano, who was to become the big boss of the Miami Beach underworld operations in gambling, shylocking, narcotics, and other bits of illegal business, all of it never proved.

Little Augie was then one of

the shrewdest hoods in the underworld. Pisano took a liking to Toddo and introduced him to Joe Adonis. The two permitted Toddo to pal around with them because he listened more than he talked, was polite without being subservient, respectful and always conducted himself with the greatest propriety in public places.

Pisano and Adonis were involved heavily in smuggling booze into the country, as was Frank Costello. They needed a man they could trust in their Brooklyn operation. They chose Thomas "Toddo" Marino. That was all Marino needed.

Like most of the top hoods such as Lansky, Costello, and Gambino, Marino invested in legitimate businesses. He opened a bar and grill on Twenty-second Street and Fifth Avenue in Brooklyn. Three years later he opened a restaurant in the same neighborhood.

He gained prestige in Mafia circles and in the neighborhood where he lived. Like Gambino, he was always available when someone in the neighborhood was in trouble. Even today, he contributes to the church, attends services regularly, and is respectfully referred to by his neighbors as "Don Toddo".

In 1941, he invested heavily in the bookmaking and gambling rackets. In addition, he opened up bars, restaurants, cleaning establishments, and laundries in Bay Ridge, on Fort Hamilton Parkway, and in South Brooklyn, all with the blessing of the Syndicate. He was a power.

This was the man that Carlo Gambino won as a friend.

At this time, Vito Genovese made his move to take over, and he sought out Carlo Gambino in the hope that Gambino would agree to the move.

Genovese knew that Gambino was Lucky Luciano's man and so exerted a great deal of influence with the top members in the crime cartel.

Though Luciano was five thousand miles away in Italy, he sent his orders to Albert Anastasia, the Lord High Executioner of Murder, Incorporated, and closely aligned with Carlo Gambino. Genovese plotted to get rid of Anastasia.

However, Anastasia's leiutenant, Frank "Don Cheech" Scalise, was extremely loyal to Anastasia. Kill Anastasia and you had to kill Scalise or reprisals would be swift and deadly. Scalise was also a close friend of Luciano and had visited him several times in Italy. Scalise was a power in his own right as the boss of the construction racket in the Bronx.

Genovese called Gambino and asked for a meeting.

"I think you will be very much interested in what I have to say, Carlo," Genovese said.

"Yes, Vito, I am sure." Gambino was certain that Genovese had a plan to eliminate some of the competition standing in his way as boss of bosses and wanted his help. "Where would you like to have this meeting, Vito?"

Genovese named a restaurant in Brooklyn.

"I know the place. What time?"

"Three o'clock tomorrow afternoon okay?"

"Sure, Vito. I'll be there."

Gambino called Don Toddo and told him about the meeting. Don Toddo warned Gambino.

"I do not trust Genovese, Carlo. He will use anyone he can in order to help him get what he wants. You know what he wants."

"Sure, Toddo. But two can play at that game. I will listen to him. It won't hurt."

"Very well. I will have some of my boys check out the restaurant before you get there just to make sure."

"I don't think that will be necessary but go ahead anyway."

"For your protection, Carlo."

"I understand."

GAMBINO MET with Genovese. There was no one else in the place when Gambino walked in. Genovese was sitting at a table in the farthest corner of the restaurant. He rose when Gambino walked in and greeted him respectfully.

When the two men were seated, Genovese said, "I have information which I have checked out that Frank Scalise has been selling memberships in the Organization to a lot of young hoods for big money, from ten thousand to twenty-five thousand dollars. Also, on that shipment of white stuff the narcotics agents knocked off a month ago, Scalise had guaran-

teed the shipment. He has welched on the payoff. I am asking you to okay the hit."

"What about Anastasia?" Gambino asked.

"I will take care of Anastasia," Genovese said coldly.

"And after that, Vito? What then?"

"You are close to Luciano. You will send word to him in Italy that Scalise and Anastasia both welched and were hit by the men they double-crossed. In return for this favor, I will throw all my strength to you so that you can take over Anastasia's family."

"There may be trouble after Anastasia is hit," Gambino pointed out.

"No, no, Carlo. No trouble. You will have Lansky on your side. You know that Anastasia and Lansky have never gotten along. Lansky will smooth things over."

Gambino saw the picture. With Scalise and Anastasia dead there would be no further competition to keep Genovese from becoming the boss of bosses.

That was all right with Gambino since he would be taking over a big segment of rackets controlled by Anastasia. If, after that, something should happen to Genovese, then, with the power he would have, he could become the boss of bosses. It was a very tempting prospect.

He nodded. "I agree, Vito. I shall cooperate with you. You have my word."

"Good, my friend. It is a deal." He extended his hand which Gambino shook. Both men rose and walked out together.

On June 17, 1957, Scalise went to a fruit market in the Bronx. While he was bent over one of the stands, two gunmen walked up behind him and shot him four times in the head and neck. He died before he hit the ground.

Scalise's brother Joe went to Anastasia and demanded that Frank's killers be hit. Anastasia had heard the story of Frank's welching and the selling of memberships. He had checked out both stories and found them to be correct. He refused to do anything about the killing.

Joe Scalise then vowed that he would do something about it.

The word then went out to hit Joe Scalise. He learned of it and went into hiding. He was gone for two months when he received word that he was forgiven and had nothing to fear. He returned to New York, and his old haunts.

On September seventh he suddenly disappeared and noth-

ing was ever heard of him since.

The killing of the Scalise brothers was not so much an advance of Genovese's plan to become the number one man in the Mafia as it was Gambino's. He now became the second in command to Anastasia in Anastasia's family. The next step, of course, was Anastasia.

Genovese held another meeting with Gambino to discuss hitting Anastasia. Gambino shrugged.

"That is your business, Vito. Whatever you decide."

"I want your assurance that there will be no retribution, that no one in my family will get hurt."

"If I do not know who the men responsible for the hit are how can order reprisals, eh, Vito?"

Genovese grinned. "Yes, of course. And you will not know, my friend."

Genovese was wrong. Gambino knew hours afterward who the killers were. After Genovese left, Gambino got in touch with Meyer Lansky. He wanted the okay from Lansky on his part in the plot.

Lansky considered Anastasia an illiterate, ignorant, imprudent thug whose answer to everything was violence. The low opinion was mutual. Anastasia thought Lansky was a money hungry, condescending, self-styled intellectual, an outsider who was neither Italian nor Sicilian, and had no place in the hierarchy of the Syndicate.

Lansky, however, was prudent, cautious, and shunned violence as much as possible. In his role as financial genius of the Syndicate he wanted everything run smoothly, and advised against killings.

Gambino told Lansky of his talk with Genovese.

"You gave Genovese your okay?" Lansky asked.

"Not exactly. I said it was his business and that I didn't want to know who the hit men were to be."

"I see. Well, Carlo, you are guilty of knowledge. That could make you a co-conspirator if things went wrong. But like you told Genovese, I'm telling you, it's your business. So far as I am concerned I heard nothing from you. I am going to forget this conversation. I want you to forget it. You understand?"

"Of course, Meyer." Lansky's answer was all that Gambino wanted. No objections. You want to involve yourself, that's your business. As Gambino looked at the whole thing, he was in the clear.

He did not sanction the hit, he was to have no actual part in it. There was no way he

could be tied to it. Genovese certainly would never admit to his part in it, and since only Genovese had spoken to him of it, he was clean.

Genovese, a schemer, decided not to use his own men in hitting Anastasia. He turned the task over to Joe Profaci, who was a close friend of Lansky's. Profaci, in turn, gave the contract to "Crazy Joe" Gallo, one of three brothers, who were experts in the matter of doing away with undesirables and trouble makers.

The string, from Genovese to Profaci to Gallo, was such that tracing the murder plot to Genovese would be difficult —and to trace it to Gambino, impossible.

On the morning of October 25, 1957, Albert Anastasia was driven by Anthony Coppola into New York City from his walled estate in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Coppola, Anastasia's chauffeur and bodyguard, let Anastasia off in front of the Park Sheraton Hotel on Seventh Avenue and 55th Street. Coppola then parked the car in a garage a few blocks away and went for a walk.

Anastasia went into the barbershop, hung up his coat, and sat down in a chair. He told Joseph Bocchino, the barber, he wanted a haircut. Bocchino draped a cloth around Anastasia's neck as Anastasia leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes. Bocchino took a pair of clippers and began cutting on the shaggy hair.

At that moment the barbershop door swung open and closed silently.

Two men, silk scarves covering most of their faces stepped inside, pistols in hand. One of the men mumbled softly to Arthur Grasso, the owner.

"Keep your mouth shut or I'll blow your head off!"

Grasso backed away from the two men and covered his face with his hands. The two hoods strode calmly to where Anastasia sat, pushed Bocchino to one side, leveled their pistols and began firing.

Anastasia leaped out of the chair as the first shots struck him. Completely out of his wits, he lunged at the reflection of the two gunmen in the mirror in front of him. Another volley of shots struck him in the neck and shoulder. The impact threw him against the glass shelf of the mirror and he crashed to the floor. Bottles of hair tonic and cologne shattered around him as he fell.

One of the gunmen took careful aim and sent a slug thundering into Anastasia's head. The other gunmen looked around the shop in a swift glance.

"Stay where you are or I'll kill you!" he warned.

The two hoods turned and hurried out of the shop onto Seventh Avenue. They walked briskly down the B.M.T. subway and disappeared from view. As they escaped from the murder scene they got rid of their weapons. One of them dropped his gun in the vestibule of the shop. The other killer tossed his weapon into a trash barrel on the subway platform.

The whole thing had taken less than two minutes.

LUCKY LUCIANO

GENOVESE MOVED immediately to take over as *capo di tutti capi*. Gambino, quietly and without much trumpeting of his moves, took over the head of the Anastasia family.

Genovese made his next big move to establish his position as the Boss of Bosses. He called together the leaders of the Syndicate for a conference to set up guide lines and reestablish territories and a unification of operations in all the rackets.

Stefano Magaddino, Buffalo boss, suggested the meeting be held at the home of Joseph Barbara in the sleepy Upstate New York hamlet of Apalachin. It was a serious mistake, as things turned out.

One of the items on Genovese's agenda was to be his demand to be recognized as boss of all bosses. As a gesture of their good will, he demanded the Syndicate leaders bring tribute in the form of cash, which they were to turn over to him. He demanded the authorization and compliance by all the leaders for a purge of all unreliable members. Another specific point was the organization of the drug traffic, in which he was to play a maior role.

Voting on these points never came to pass. Every hood boss who agreed to attend never gave thought to the fact that some hundred expensive automobiles, most of them with

out-of-state license plates, could pass through a small town and not create suspicion.

When the Cadillacs, Continentals, Rollses, and other luxury cars were on the road to the Barbara estate it aroused the curiosity of Sergeant Edgar D. Crosswell of the New York State Police. He set up road blocks around the Barbara property and waited for things to happen.

A minor member of the convention went out for a stroll a short time before the meeting was called to order, saw the police cars and the road blocks, and hastened back to the house to report what he had seen. There was immediate confusion.

What followed could have made a comedy scene in a movie. Elderly and middle-aged hoods, dapper in their hand-tailored suits, rushed through the house looking for a way out. Some climbed through windows, others fled through back doors, most of them fleeing through the woods and underbrush in their wild rush to escape arrest.

Crosswell had reinforced himself with a score of troopers and they arrested sixty underworld leaders, among them, Vito Genovese, Stefano Magaddino, Sam Trafficante, John Scalish of Cleveland, Frank DeSimone of Los Angeles, Joe Bonanno, Joe Ida of Philadelphia, Jimmy Colletti of Colorado, Joe Profaci, Jimmy Civello of Dallas, and Joe Barbara. The roundup stunned the underworld.

The lucky ones who escaped were said to be Joe Zerilli of Detroit, Sam Giancana of Chicago, and James Lanza of San Francisco, among the other forty odd who had been in attendance.

Many of those arrested refused to answer questions, took the fifth Amendment against self-incrimination. They were charged with obstructing justice, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to prison. All the convictions were later overturned on appeals on the grounds that a meeting in itself did not constitute a crime.

But the debacle brought a harsh condemnation of Genovese by all the leaders for not having provided proper protection, and with it Genovese's dream of complete rule shattered around him in ruins.

Carlo Gambino got away clean, reflected on the disaster, and smiled. The entire affair could not have been more advantageous to him than if he had planned it himself. It hurried the timetable in his plans to become Boss of Bosses.

There were other matters to

attend to, however, and Gambino gave them his attention.

The most important one was Joe "Joe Bananas" Bonanno, who ruled the smallest of the five New York families. In comparison, small was fitting, but in the size of Bonanno's operations it was far from that. He had expanded his holdings all the way from Brooklyn to Tucson, Arizona, where he had built a luxury type home. His enterprises were in the Midwest, Canada, and the Caribbean. He had grandiose ideas, and his blueprint was to eliminate at one and the same time Tommy Lucchese, Stefano Magaddino, and Carlo Gambino.

Bonanno was not big enough to pull off such a coup, so he called on Joseph Magliocco, a Brooklyn Mafioso and leader of the lethal Profaci clan.

Magliocco believed that Bonanno could pull of the coup and take over command, in which case Magliocco would benefit greatly by having his field of operations extended. He passed the murder contract on to Joe Colombo, who said he was delighted with the idea.

He wasn't. He just pretended to be. What he had in mind was an opportunity for a Machiavellian type double cross. He believed that Bonanno and Magliocco couldn't carry off the plan and come out on top. Bigger rewards would be realized by a grateful Carlo Gambino. He took his information to Gambino.

Gambino, by this time, was a power on the board of the national commission of the Syndicate. As such, he was not one with whom to trifle. Plotting his muder was akin to suicide.

The commission summoned Bonanno to appear before it and explain himself. He refused. He was ordered again to appear, and once again he refused.

Realizing he was in serious trouble, Bonanno attempted to name his son, Salvatore "Bill" Bonanno, as boss of his family, saying that he was a sick man and was retiring from the rackets.

The commission refused to accede to the move and named its own boss. The Bonanno family, hard-nosed, refused to accept this and the infamous Bonanno War broke loose. Bodies were dumped all over Brooklyn streets. And suddenly, Joe Bonanno disappeared.

He had dinner with his attorney, William Power Maloney, on the evening of October 24, 1964, and the two men were saying good-night to each other in front of Maloney's

home on Park Avenue and 36th Street when two hoods appeared from the shadows. They grabbed Bonanno, fired a warning shot at Maloney's feet to freeze him in position, shoved Bonanno into a car and disappeared into the night at a high rate of speed.

The underworld said he had been killed, then buried in a lonely field, or crushed in a cement mixer.

Yet, in January 1965, while the FBI was searching for his body, Gambino called a meeting of some of the top members of the national commission that was held in the Capri restaurant in Cedarhurst, Long Island, New York.

Attending were Salvatore "Sam Mooney" Giancana of Chicago, Angelo Bruno of Philly, Stefano Magaddino, Tommy Lucchese, and, of course, Gambino. The four men voted to kill Bonanno. Gambino was in favor of a more moderate course. The meeting ended without a definite course of action.

A week later Gambino discussed the situation with Sam "The Plumber" DeCavalcante, who bossed a small New Jersey family, and shortly after, DeCavalcante discussed the matter with his chief lieutenant, Joe DeSelva. Unfortunately for DeCavalcante, he didn't know that the FBI had bugged his office.

DeCavalcante said to DeSelva, "The commission haven't decided yet what to do with Bonanno. We figure we'll take him to Florida, hit him there and bury him."

This was the first time that the FBI knew that Bonanno was alive. An intensive search was made for him.

Another part of the conversation overheard by the FBI between DeCavalcante and DeSelva was to the effect that Joseph Magliocco did not die a natural death, but has been rubbed out.

DeCavalcante said, "Bonanno put Magliocco up to a lot of things. He told him to hit Carlo Gambino and Tommy Brown. Magliocco was poisoned. They fed him a pill."

The death of Magliocco left a vacancy at the top of the old Profaci family. He filled it by appointing Joseph Colombo as the new ruler in gratitude for the information he had brought him. Not only that, but he also elevated Colombo to Profaci's old seat on the national commission. It was an unpopular choice because most of the men in the top positions of the Syndicate felt that Colombo lacked the experience and intelligence to carry on as head of so important a family. However,

Gambino's power was too great to contend.

GAMBINO NOW TURNED his attention to Vito Genovese. Genovese, despite the fact that he did not have the backing of the commission, declared himself Boss of Bosses.

Characteristically violent, an amoral and atavistic hoodlum, he was feared not only for himself, but because he commanded a family of some five-hundred hoods, all of them as hard and tough as he himself. An open war with him would spill blood all over New York's five Boroughs and bring heat on the town that no one wanted.

Gambino said he would handle it.

He sent a message to Anna Genovese, who was living apart from her husband, angry and disillusioned. She knew of Vito's string of mistresses, as she knew that he had ordered her first husband's murder in order to win her.

During World War II, when Vito was in Italy as a friend of Benito Mussolini and enjoying the favors of many Italian beauties there, she had taken on several lovers herself. They had proved much more satisfactory than Vito, whom she regarded as a "Lousy Latin Lover."

After a brief talk with Gambino, Anna sued for separate maintenance. Her story to the court was that Vito was a very rich man. Their home in Atlantic Highlands had cost $75,000. Genovese spent an additional hundred thousand dollars in renovations, and a quarter of a million dollars for furnishings. There were Chinese teak furniture, Italian statuary, marble fireplaces and staircases, gold and platinum dishes.

"My husband," she declared, "never pays less than two hundred and fifty dollars for a suit, three hundred and fifty dollars for a coat, sixty dollars for a pair of shoes. We have lived very high. I have many fur coats, dresses that cost from three hundred to nine dollars each."

She further stated that all the time her husband was in Italy, she kept the books and that his income from the Italian lottery never was less than forty thousand dollars a week.

"I can no longer live with him because he has beaten me brutally on many occasions."

Genovese's friends expected him to kill her or have her killed. Instead, and for a reason no one could understand, Genovese ordered a contract on his onetime friend, Steve Franse, in whose care he had left Anna when he had decided

to go to Italy during the war. Killing Franse would be a warning to Anna that she had better stop her talking.

Franse was lured to a restaurant where he was brutally beaten, garroted, and his body tossed into the rear of his car, which was driven at a spot on the Grand Concourse and abandoned.

It was a fruitless killing. There were too many things now against Genovese. Anna's testimony sent Federal authorities to his office, where they seized his books. What the Feds wanted was not an income tax evasion rap but evidence of involvement in major crimes, a murder, narcotics, anything that would send Genovese away for a long time.

Gambino learned of a small time pusher named Nelson Cantellops who was serving a five year term in Sing Sing on a drug rap. A lawyer called on Cantellops, and offered him protection—and a large sum of money—if he would tell what he knew about Genovese's deals in narcotics.

Cantellops wrote a letter to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics asking for an interview. The Feds didn't believe that Cantellops, a Puerto Rican who was busted for pushing junk on street corners, could have any information linking higher ups in the Mafia to drugs. However, after agents talked with him for several days they decided they could use him in their efforts to nail Genovese and members of the Genovese family Cantellops implicated.

Cantellops' story was that, at first, he had been only a pusher, but he had met some important people in the Syndicate for whom he did errands. He was often entrusted with large amounts of heroin by "Big John" Ormento for delivery to various members of the organization. He proved to be a most reliable messenger.

In a short time he was introduced to some of the bigger men in the organization, among them Natale Evola and Rocco Mazzie, two of Genovese's most trusted lieutenants, and finally to Vito Genovese himself. Then came the story that crushed Genovese.

At a date and time Cantellops named, he was in a car with Evola, Mazzie, Ormento, and Genovese when Genovese gave the orders to his men to move in and take over the narcotics distribution in the East Bronx.

This testimony resulted in the indictment of Genovese and twenty-four other men for narcotics conspiracy. In the spring of 1959, fifteen of the twenty-four were brought to trial.

The other nine took off for parts unknown and fugitive warrants were issued for them, becoming the objects of intensive manhunts.

The only witness against Genovese was Cantellops.

Defense attorneys were certain that Cantellops had been briefed, that he had been given the information to which he testified by someone. However, no matter how hard they tried to shake him, Cantellops could not be moved from his testimony nor tripped up.

All the defendants were found guilty. Genovese was sentenced to a term of fifteen years in a federal penitentiary.

Genovese was certain beyond all doubt that someone in the Syndicate had wanted him out of the way but he wasn't certain just who. He suspected several, among them Carlo Gambino and Frank Costello, Abner "Longy" Zwillman, and Tony Bender.

The members of Genovese's family sent their most skilled killers to get Zwillman and Bender, and Gambino, if possible. Costello was in and out of prison, battling denaturalization moves. Eventually, his citizenship was revoked in 1961 but he fought deportation and remained out on bail.

Abner "Longy" Zwillman was found dead hanging from a rafter in the cellar of his West Orange, New Jersey home on February 27, 1959.

The story was that he had committed suicide. With his hands tied behind him? And a taut wire around his neck? Moreover, his body was bruised, indicating he had been beaten. Underworld sources declared that Gerry Catena, Genovese's underboss, had let out the contract on Zwillman.

Tony Bender was next. On April 8, 1962, he left home for a walk. No trace has been found of him to this day. According to the best sources of information, Bender was strangled, his body tossed into a cement mixer, and the blood and flesh of Bender is now part of a Manhattan skyscraper project.

With Genovese in prison, the so-called regents of the mob, Mike Miranda, Tommy Eboli, and Gerry Catena, were not strong enough to control the mob or administer the vast holdings Genovese had attained.

Little by little, Gambino took over one and another of Genovese's rackets. He couldn't be stopped. Then, in 1962, Lucky Luciano died of a heart attack in Naples.

Gambino was the only man who knew of all the contacts in Europe who had supplied

heroin to Luciano. He contacted them and they agreed to deal only with him. The national crime cartel had to deal with Gambino. They had no objection, because they felt that Gambino was fair. Thus Gambino further strengthened his hold on all the rackets in New York and his position as Boss of Bosses.

There was one last obstacle to face now and Gambino would be securely ensconced in his role of *capo di tutti capi*.

The Gallos.

The Gallos wanted in. They were no longer satisfied with being mere hit men. Larry Gallo, the oldest of the three brothers, was invited to a meeting at the Sahara Lounge in Brooklyn to discuss the demands made on Gambino. He was told he would receive good news. He barely escaped death in the form of a noose around his neck, by the appearance of a cop on a routine check of his rounds.

Crazy Joe Gallo was arrested by three detectives on a charge of extortion and convicted in a sensational trial. He was sentenced to a term of seven to fourteen years. When Crazy Joe was released from prison he attempted to take over again. The year was 1971. He had only a short time to live. He married a lovely young woman and was celebrating with his bride and several friends and their wives in the early morning hours at Umberto's Clam House in Brooklyn when two gunmen walked in and shot him dead.

Vito Genovese died suddenly in prison. Joe Adonis died in Italy. Tommy (Ryan) Eboli, a top lieutenant in the Genovese family, was shot and killed. Jerry Catena went to prison.

And now, at last, Carlo Gambino was on top with no one to challenge him.

Federal authorities have tried to deport him but each time they sought to bring him into court Gambino was suddenly seized with a heart attack. He is today in his seventies, his once sturdy figure down to 145 pounds, his face thin, the nose elongated, but the brain is as agile as ever, and he remains the Godfather to the Syndicate.

Though he remains powerful, his word law, he is not a vicious man.

It has been peaceful for a while. What will happen after Gambino dies no one really knows. It's a good bet that murders will once again be committed in a struggle for supremacy and the title of *capo di tutti capi*.

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown? Maybe.

A dog found the body, but it was up to one lone cop to translate what just had to be

A RECORD OF GUILT

by JAMES McKIMMEY

IT WAS the sixth time Inspector Harry Grange had made the commuter-train trip from the city up to the small town in the low mountains. And it was twenty-eight days since the bullet ridden body of Noel Berry had been found buried behind the weekend cabin of John Shrewer.

Grange, tall and rocky with cop-cold eyes, climbed from the train. He walked the length of the main street of the town, then continued along the narrow winding road which led to the various cabins interspersed through the woods beyond.

A half mile out, Grange paused in front of a white-painted house, the size and

durable look of it indicating its year-around use. A brown and white beagle, ears flying, back legs splaying out with each bound, speeded toward Grange.

"Hello, Biscuit!" Grange said with enthusiasm. He reached down to ruffle the hair of the dog's head.

A tall man in boots and suede jacket appeared in the doorway, saying, "Hello, Inspector. Back again I see."

Grange nodded.

"And I guess Biscuit hasn't forgotten you," the man said.

"A good dog, Mr. Martin," Grange said. "Mind if I take him for a walk?"

George Martin shook his head, smiling. "He'd tear the house up if I didn't let him. You're going to look over Shrewer's property again?

"Yes," Grange said.

"You're a stubborn man, Inspector. But then maybe that's what makes a good policeman. I mean, take Biscuit there, he's stubborn, too. That's why he's a good rabbit hunter. If he hadn't been so stubborn that way, why, we'd never have found that fellow's body, never have known anybody'd been murdered up here. Well, I wish you luck, Inspector. I think John Shrewer did it, all right. I hope you can prove it, in time."

Grange nodded, then he and the dog moved on. A mile further along the road, Grange stopped. A brown and yellow mountain cabin was perched just off the road along a bank that ran down into a deep ravine. Grange knew that Shrewer was not there. His car was absent, and, although it was a warm day, the front door of the house was closed and windows were covered securely by strongly-built metal shutters. The beagle stood beside Grange, panting happily, then stood up on short hind legs and licked his hand.

Absentmindedly patting the dog's head Grange thought of the day he'd come here and had first seen the dug-up body of Noel Berry, John Shrewer's bright young bookkeeper. It had not been a pleasant experience, but Grange had been through enough such sights that he was able to concentrate on the details of his work.

Professional impersonality had left him twice, however. Once he'd felt compassion when he'd been required to talk to Berry's distraught mother and to the young man's intended bride. When he had begun his questioning of the obvious suspect, John Shrewer, his usual lack of emotion had been replaced by a distinct distaste, nearly approaching hate.

Shrewer, of course, had been implicated the instant Noel

Berry, missing for several days, had been discovered here. The body had been securely buried, until Biscuit's sensitive nose had come near, at the bottom of the ravine behind Shrewer's weekend cabin.

Because Shrewer's permanent residence was in the city, and because of the logical suspicion cast upon him, Grange had been assigned to the case.

Looking down the slant of the ravine, Grange remembered his first impression of Shrewer. He had tried very hard to shake his immediate dislike for the man. Shrewer, however, had only helped intensify the feeling by the way he looked, by the way he acted.

He was, in truth, a bitter, aging bachelor, whose cold gray eyes reflected no warmth or sympathy. There was a rasping, domineering quality to his voice. His temper was short. He was the owner of several small retail businesses, and he was the controlling factor of an expanding real-estate corporation development.

Even though Grange put little faith in first impressions, he was nevertheless certain that Shrewer's exterior was an exact reflection of the inner man. And Grange had been certain, from the beginning, that Shrewer had killed Noel Berry.

Investigation had proven only that Shrewer was a man whom nobody liked, a man whose business dealings were as deadly as though he used a sword instead of crafty intellingence. His neighbors in the city avoided him. His associates aligned themselves with him solely for business purposes. The people of this small town where Shrewer spent occasional weekends characterized him as a flinty, sharp-tongued, tight-fisted old man who argued over bills honestly charged to him and who tried in every way possible to get the most for nothing.

He could, most townsmen fervently agreed, kill a man as easily as he could cheat at a purchase. But, there was no legitimate indication of Shrewer's guilt. No proven motive. Not even a small piece of evidence that Shrewer had even been in the area at the time of the killing.

Shrewer had stood angrily on his statement that he had not left his city apartment the Sunday of Berry's murder; that, in fact, he had not been to the cabin in over two months. There was no proof available that he had remained in that city apartment; but then there was no proof that he had not. No one had seen him drive through town; but he could have arrived and left unnoticed

by an alternate route on the other side of the woods.

Nor had a murder weapon been found.

ONCE AGAIN the beagle leaped up to lick at Grange's hand, and Grange reached into a pocket to draw out a wallet, the one that had been found in Berry's hip pocket. Grange extended the wallet toward the beagle, letting the dog sniff it. Then he patted the dog's flank. "All right, boy."

The beagle romped down the cliff. Grange did not know what he expected to discover. It was only that he couldn't quit. Shrewer had murdered, he was certain, and Shrewer was not paying for that crime. Grange had to keep on searching, even if he had no explicit plans.

He watched the dog move on, deeper into the ravine, until the animal reached the spot where the body had been buried. Biscuit circled the area, sniffing, then came back up the bank.

Grange shook his head, sighing. "Good boy. We'll find it. Whatever there is to find."

He started down the stone steps leading to the front door of the cabin when, from behind, up the road and deeper in the woods, came a tan sedan with an electric-company label on its door.

It stopped, and a thin man with yellow hair scrambled out, a book in his hand, saying, "Howdy, mister." He grinned. "Well, hello there, Biscuit. How are you, pup?" He came down the steps toward Grange. "Friend of his owner?"

"In a way," Grange replied. "I'm Inspector Grange, from the city."

"Oh, yeah," the man said. "Sure. I thought you looked familiar. I've seen you around."

The man walked to a corner of the cabin and stopped in front of the meter and electrical switches controlling the circuits of the structure. "Still after figuring out who killed that boy, right?"

Grange nodded. "That's right."

"Well," the man said, "You ask me, the guy who done that is the guy who owns this here house. But I don't know. Maybe it's just because I don't like the old boy. He's tried to get me into trouble with my job more than once. And I don't forget it."

"How?" Grange asked.

"Keeps claiming I read his meter wrong. Raises hell with the company. Tries to get out of paying the bill. Well—maybe that don't mean he'd kill somebody, even if he is a tight, old skinflint. But maybe it does. Good luck, Inspector."

The meter man recoded figures in his book, then returned to his car and started forward in the direction of town. As he did, another car—a long black sedan—appeared on the narrow road. The meter man stopped. And the black sedan kept approaching, horn blasting angrily. The meter man backed then, allowing the black car to come to a rest above the cabin. He then came forward again, skirted around it, and moved out of sight.

Grange watched a flashing-eyed John Shrewer step out of the black car. Once again that familiar, unescapable hatred rose up inside Grange—he couldn't help repicturing the confused, sorrowful look on the face of Noel Berry's mother, on the face of the young girl he was to have married.

Shrewer came down the stone steps dressed in an old suit the color of his car, glaring at Grange, rasping, "Haven't you and the rest poked around her enough? I'm going to see my lawyer about this!"

Grange started to reply, then did not. His throat had constricted with anger; he tried to fight it because he was trying very hard to retain his neutrality.

"Why don't you get out of here?" Shrewer snapped. "And get that dog off my property!"

He extended a large key into a heavy lock on the door of the cabin. The door was sturdy-looking, and Grange had decided that the lock had been specially installed to increase its strength. Shrewer, he'd learned, trusted no one.

"Do you mind if I come in?" Grange asked.

"Certainly I mind! You've got no right."

You're still a suspect," Grange said, controlling his temper, "and don't forget it. But I'll make this a polite call, unless you force me to make it something else."

Shrewer grumbled angrily, but then threw the door open and stomped inside. Grange followed.

Inside, Shrewer turned. "Why don't you quit, Grange? You

have no proof, nothing. And you know it."

Grange's eyes examined the room—barely illuminated from the open doorway—taking in the heavy beamed ceiling, the thick oak furniture, the stone fireplace with its hearth cold and black. He'd seen the room endless times by now, but still. . .

"One thing I don't have to put with," Shrewer snapped, "is that dog in this house. Either get him out or—!"

The beagle had followed them inside and had half-circled the room; now it went to the fireplace, raised up on its hind legs, and sniffed at the stones.

As Grange watched the actions of the dog carefully, Shrewer picked up a fire poker.

"I'm telling you," Shrewer cried, "remove that dog, or I'll *fix* him!"

"All right," Grange said shortly. "Come on, Biscuit."

As he left the house with the dog trotting beside him, he heard Shrewer bang the door shut behind him. He walked up the stone steps slowly, feeling weary and defeated.

The sun had disappeared now and darkness was approaching rapidly. Grange turned and surveyed the house once more, watching slivers of light appear between the cracks of the metal window coverings as Shrewer lighted the room. Grange's forehead suddenly furrowed into a frown, his mind spinning. Then his eyes switched to gaze at the fuse box on the side of the house where the meter man had stood taking his reading.

Softly, excitedly, Grange said, "Come on, Biscuit!"

FORTY-FIVE MINUTES later, Grange—alone now reappared along the path, moving rapidly. He walked straight down the stone steps and rapped on the door.

"Who is it?" Shrewer rasped.

"Grange. Open up."

"I don't have to!"

"I think you'd better, and quickly."

A moment later Shrewer grudgingly opened the door, eyes blazing at Grange. "I tell you, I will call my lawyer!"

"Better do it then," Grange said, coming inside. "You're going to need him."

"What's that?"

"Get your hat, Shrewer. I'm taking you in."

Shrewer finally smiled, a hard, mean, humorless smile, and shook his head. "You are a fool, Grange."

"Maybe I was for a time, not thinking any better than I did," Grange said. "But that doesn't matter now. Because I can

prove you were up here when Berry died."

"You're crazy," Shrewer said, his smile disappearing.

"No, I'm not," Grange said. "Your meter was read this afternoon. Because you don't have the electricity cut off while you're gone, do you? Just in the event that you might come up here at any time?"

Shrewer frowned, eyes seeming to become smaller.

"I've just checked," Grange said. "The electric-company records show that electricity was used in this house between August first and September first—during the period that Berry was murdered."

Shrewer's eyes widened, then seemed to become smaller again. "That doesn't prove anything."

"You claimed that you hadn't been up here for two months. You were lying about that, Shrewer."

Shrewer's head shook back and forth, his mouth paling. "It could have been *anybody* using this place. The murderer—"

"This cabin's a very tough place to break into," Grange said. "And if it had been broken into, you'd have known it the minute you stepped into it afterward. You didn't report it, did you? Besides, and more important, you paid the last electric-company's billing. And you've got a reputation, Shrewer.

"You'd never have paid that bill for electricity you hadn't used. An error on your part. And a big one, as it turns out. But at the time you thought the body would never be found, didn't you? Is that why you wanted to kill the dog with the poker earlier? Because it found the body?"

"Nonsense!" Shrewer shouted. "Everything you're saying. You can't prove a thing. You simply can't—!"

"It's what we need," Grange said. "*All* we need for now. Because it opens it again—the possibility. And now we'll start over and crack your alibi apart inch by inch. You're through, Shrewer."

Shrewer kept shaking his head, turning away from Grange toward the fireplace, hands trembling. "I'm an old man," he said quiveringly. "*Old*. Not well. . ."

Then, suddenly, he had knocked a stone from the edge of the fireplace. He was reaching inside, into an exposed hole, clutching.

Grange stepped forward, pistol out, the barrel whipping at Shrewer's wrist. Shrewer cried out in pain as the revolver he'd drawn from the hole bounced harmlessly to the floor.

"Step back now," Grange

said, motioning with his gun. The old man backed, eyes blazing again.

Grange glanced once at the hole Shrewer had exposed by knocking away the stone. He saw a folded white envelope. He took it out.

It was addressed to the board of directors of Shrewer's real-estate firm; Grange knew from past investigation that it was the murdered youth's hand that had addressed it.

Grange pulled out the letter. He glanced only at the beginning of what Noel Berry had written:

Dear Sirs:

I am hereby, of honest necessity, compelled to report the following discrepancies found in the accounts of this corporation. . ."

Grange looked at Shrewer again.

Shrewer's face twitched. "All right! Berry was too holy for his own good! Came to my apartment and told me he was going to submit that letter unless I reported the shortage to the board. Wouldn't take what I offered him to forget about it. So I made him drive us up here in my car. I shot him, in the chest, then in the back—and buried him! The fool! Full of stupid self-righteous honesty! That was a lot of money involved. I worked hard to get it!"

Grange spoke softly, cooly: "But why did you keep this letter?"

"Because it tells how Berry had found the discrepancies. I was going to use it to fix the figures. But now—"

The old man's face was white. His whole body was quivering. And quite suddenly he reached out for the fireplace poker.

Grange, motioning his gun, said, "I wouldn't. I would just get your hat now and we'll be going."

Then he was directing the old man out, gun and letter in possession. And as they climbed the stone steps, Grange listened to familiar barking.

He would, he decided, come back to this town very shortly. But for different reasons now. He needed a rest. And a rabbit hunt in country like this would be a nice way to relax. Especially with a good dog.

in every issue: a complete Mike Shayne short novel in:

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

THE DOUBLE-BREASTED COAT

by

HERBERT

HARRIS

There wasn't one witness to the daring hotel robbery except for an old soldier who refused to fade away . . .

IT WAS ON the night of the Grand Gala Dance in the big ballroom of the Hotel International that some person unknown brought off a mass raid on the luxury first-floor rooms and carried off every decent piece of jewelry in sight.

The dance band drummed out its version of current hits. A few hundred sweating dancers stamped and twisted around the lofty-pillared room. Above their heads a daring hotel pirate worked swiftly and silently.

It was much later at night when a women discovered what had happened. She ran, white-faced and in tears, from room 17 and sought out the hotel manager, who was in his private suite enjoying a late supper.

A diamond necklace had gone from her jewel-box. She would have been wearing it, only a rope of pearls went better with her black velvet. It had been a wedding-anniversary gift and had great sentimental value. Yes, she *had* locked her door, and had the key in her bag. So how could it happen?

The hotel manager was destined to remember that Grand Gala Dance as a sort of nightmare without an end. As the night wore on, reports of thefts came in thick and fast.

A watch set with diamonds from room 13, a small diamond tie-pin from room 12, some real pearls from room 11, a gold cigarette-case from room 14, some diamond dress-shirt studs and links from room 10, three assorted rings from roon 16 . . .

The Grand Gala Dance should have ended in a glorious explosion of noise and color. Instead it fizzled tamely. Victims of the room raider had spread their tales of woe. It threw a wet blanket over the whole proceedings.

"My God!" the manager said wanly. "What the directors will say about this little lot I tremble to think. 'Where was the security?' they will ask."

He looked at the clock on the office-wall. Past two a.m. His face looked grey and drawn with fatigue.

"A wide-open opportunity," observed Detective-Inspector Marshall, who had come on the case personally instead of sending his Number Two, because there had been a bit too much hotel piracy just lately.. "I mean. . .everybody in the ballroom for the Gala Dance, and those first-floor rooms—where the people with the money stay—unprotected. Wasn't anyone patrolling the floor?"

The manager sighed. "One girl. She was in the room where the linen is kept when this fellow walked in and shut the door behind him. The girls said, 'What do you want?' And then he twisted her arm behind her back and pressed a pad over her nose and mouth. Chloroform or ether, I suppose."

"But the girl's given a description of him?"

The manager nodded. "A smallish, slightly-built fellow. Dark hair, thin, dark moustache, sallow. Probably Italian by the look of him."

"Any sort of accent?"

"He didn't speak."

"A hotel this size usually has a house-detective. Don't you have one?"

"Not at the moment. Unfortunately our house-detective went sick with appendicitis just recently, and he hasn't come back yet. I didn't get a deputy. Took a chance. Silly, perhaps."

The C.I.D. man said: "We all make mistakes, Mr. Frensham. What about the hall porter?"

"Ah," the manager said, his grim expression brightening a little. "Now, we might have a productive source in Billington. That's his name—Billington. Old sweat. Salt of the earth.

Most reliable fellow in the whole place. You'll want to talk to him, Inspector. I already have, as you know."

"Did he say he had seen this fellow the girl described—the slim, dark-haired Italian-looking chap with the small moustache?"

"Yes," answered the manager. "At least, a man left the hotel who seems to fit that description. Could easily be the one, according to the time Billington saw him."

"Did Billington say anything to him?"

"Unfortunately, no. It was quite late, and the old chap—he's no longer young, you know—had been helping on cloaks. There was a quiet spell and the old chap was sitting down resting his legs for a bit."

"I see. Is he here now?"

"Yes," the manager said. "We'd better go and find him. He's having a lie-down somewhere. Poor old devil's tired out. Been on his feet about twenty-two hours. 'Have a bit of shut eye,' I told him, 'then we'll have another talk. You might have thought of something by then,' I said. Come on, Inspector, let's go."

Billington, the hall porter, got up smartly from an upholstered chair in one of the residents' lounges when the manager bustled in with Inspector Marshall. He stood very erect, almost at attention, his back ramrod straight, thumbs in line with the side-seams of his well-pressed trousers.

He had been a regular army man, finally a sergeant-major, and it stood out a mile. Clear eyes shining keenly from under formidable bushy eyebrows, a healthy weatherbeaten skin. Every inch the parade-ground disciplinarian, the square-bashing so-and-so. The hotel had found him invaluable in curing the staff of any slovenly, slipshod habits.

If the hotel was short on security, it couldn't be faulted on spit-and-polish, thanks largely to ex-Royal-Sergeant-major Billington.

"Ah, Mr. Frensham, sir, I was about to request permission to see you," the hall porter said. There was a note of excitement in his voice, but suppressed to the level of good sober conduct.

"You were? You've remembered something vital?" the manager asked eagerly.

"I think it might be considered vital, Mr. Frensham, sir. At least worth reporting. With your permission, sir."

"That's fine, Billington. Let's sit down. Inspector Marshall will be interested in anything you have to tell him, even if it's only a mere theory."

FIVE MINUTES after the hall porter began his clipped guardroom-style report, Inspector Marshall and the manager were making a bee-line for the latter's office. The inspector waited impatiently while the manager thumbed feverishly through a thick file.

Then, a few minutes after the manager had found what he was looking for, the C.I.D. man was leaping in beside the driver of a police-car which had been waiting for him in the Hotel International's car park.

He rapped out an address to the driver—a flat in a tall Victorian block not very far from the hotel.

And in scarcely any time at all, it seemed Marshall was listening at the door of flat seven as light scuffling footsteps sounded inside.

"Well, she's coming all right," he whispered to Detective-Constable Blakey, his face alight with anticipation. "And if it's our girl, she won't have had time to get rid of any of the—"

He broke off abruptly as the door was opened. A young brunette stood frowning at him. She was dark-skinned, dark-haired, her mouth large and sullen, her manner vaguely sluttish. He had seen more attractive Italian girls, Marshall told himself.

She was busy tying the belt of a thin wrap that enveloped her body, slim but full-breasted. She might or might not have been wearing some flimsy night garment beneath.

"Miss Maria Rossini?"

"Yes."

Marshall introduced himself and Detective-Constable Blakey

and they produced their police-credentials. "May we talk with you for a bit?"

"Yes, but . . . "

The two detectives had walked into the living-room of her flat before receiving her formal invitation. Marshall's eyes ranged busily over the room, even taking in most of the girl's bedroom, visible through an open door. He was particularly interested in what lay on the bed.

"That coat lying on the bed in there—yours, Miss?"

"Yes." She had hesitated a moment, a convulsive movement in her throat.

Marshall walked briskly to the bedroom door, looked more closely at the coat.

"H'm . . . a double-breasted mackintosh, buttoning up both sides, light brown, bit soiled. On the roomy side for you. Miss . . . but good camouflage for . . . " His eyes flicked to the mounds of her breasts. "Certainly nice, deep, roomy pockets."

"What the devil are you talking about?" Her voice had a tremble in it. It could have been fear or anger.

"It's a man's coat," Marshall said, watching her.

She swallowed again. Then her nostrils flared and a defiant look came into the smouldering eyes. "I *do* sometimes have gentlemen friends calling on me."

"And they leave their coats when they go, do they? Oh, no, Miss Rossini, you aren't entertaining any gentlemen tonight. You have been much too busy. Shall we look in those roomy pockets and see what's inside them . . . ?"

"No!" she shrieked out as he moved toward the coat.

Then, as he picked the coat up, she sprang at him, punching, scratching, biting, kicking. In that slim, lithe body was an animal strength that amazed him. Her red fingernails were like stilettos, her white teeth like wolf's fangs. Marshall endured them all, plus a crippling blow from her knee, before Blakey managed to pin her arms from behind and drag her away.

"Phew!" Marshall exploded, panted. He felt bruised and torn, but, by gum, it had been worth it, he thought.

She had been so sure of herself, so sure they'd never look for her, that she hadn't even bothered to take the pieces of jewelry from the coat-pockets. Well, they'd start looking for a man, she had thought, not for a girl . . .

"Her short hair's not really short enough to look masculine," Marshall said, studying her. "We'd better see if there's

a man's dark wig somewhere. And maybe a false moustache . . . unless she put that on with eye-black . . ."

The Italian girl spat out an obscenity. Marshall turned casually to her. "Better get some clothes on, love," he said. "We're going for a little trip."

LATER Marshall was sitting with the manager of the Hotel International and hall porter, Billington.

"You can see what happened, Mr. Frensham," the detective said. "After you had sacked this chambermaid, Maria Rossini, she somehow contrived, while working out her week's notice, to borrow a set of master-keys to the first-floor rooms and take wax impressions of them. Maybe some shady boyfriend put her up to that one.

"Then, with a set of keys made from wax molds, she came back on the night of the Grand Gala Dance. She knew the upper rooms would be deserted, and was helped by the fact that your house-detective was out of action.

"She came dressed in a man's old mackintosh coat and disguished as a man. The bulky coat camouflaged her feminine curves, and the pockets held the chloroform pad she drugged the chambermaid with and also accommodated the loot as she went around collecting it.

"Her big mistake," Marshall added, smiling, "was ever to unbutton that coat. But even a jewel thief must sometimes pay an urgent visit to the powder-room. Or would she have been wise to have used the other place?"

They laughed.

"It's my old army training, sir," Billington said "Being a real old sweat and a sergeant-major and that. I mean, Mr. Frensham, sir, I can't help noticing little oddities of dress . . . keeping a weather-eye open for irregularities of buttons and flaps anfd things."

The manager and the inspector were trying not to treat the matter with levity.

"Came to me in a flash, sir. That was no man, I said to myself, that was a woman! I mean, sir, a man buttons a coat left over right, doesn't he? And here was this shower of a fellow—or Eye-tye bird, if you'll pardon the term, sir—walking towards the door, buttoning the coat right over left. Sissy, I thought. Then I had another think a bit later."

"Lucky you did, Sergeant-Major," said Marshall.

SURE THING

Varig was a gambling man — surely he'd bet on a sure thing, like an insurance policy on my nagging wife . . .

by MICHAEL BRETT

SITTING IN the car next to Paul Varig I admired the precise way he drove. We were on the mountain road heading toward Lake Tahoe. Varig is a profes-

sional gambler. I recalled how we had met in Las Vegas six months ago.

My wife Martha and I had gone there for the first time on a ten day vacation. I gambled and after we were there a week I had won a thousand dollars.

Beginner's luck. All right, I admit it. What still bugs me is that if Martha hadn't been with me I would have run the thousand dollars up to a fortune. There was no question about it.

What happened is that we had just enough money for the stay at the hotel plus a hundred dollars for gambling. Anybody in his right mind knows that isn't enough. A run of bad luck and you've had it. You're wiped out and that's the end of the fun.

Of course you can spend the rest of your vacation lounging around the pool and getting a tan if you're a physical health bug, or you can even fill in the hours playing golf. And you don't have to fly all the way to Las Vegas to do that. Martha and I had flown twenty-eight-hundred miles to get there.

I had a plan when I started to gamble. The limit I had placed on myself was ten dollars a day. I was reconciled to the idea that I'd lose the money. It had been figured into the cost of the vacation.

I played the dollar minimum at the blackjack table. My luck was good. Every time I won Martha would let out a squeal of pleasure.

At first I thought that was kind of cute. The dealer, even though he figured to be used to exuberant cries, was plainly irritated after I'd won over forty dollars. Las Vegas dealers are great at hiding their emotions, but the running argument Martha and I were having must have had something to do with steaming him up a little, the way I figured it.

It seemed I couldn't do any wrong. I didn't follow any system. I'd stand on twelve, thirteen and at other times I'd have the dealer hit me on seventeen and eighteen when I had a hunch that he'd go broke on his turn. I'd hit eighteen and wind up with twenty-one. That was the kind of a night it was.

The trouble started when I wanted to increase my bet by doubling up. If I had just increased my bets to two dollars I would have wound up with eighty dollars the first night instead of forty. Every time I put two dollars down Martha would say, "Now Warren, you promised. Don't you dare!"

Frankly it was kind of embarrassing having her hang over me that way. What could I

do, though? Arguing with her, or telling her to leave me alone would have ruined my time. Besides, she wouldn't have listened. That's the kind of woman she is. Once or twice when the dealer won she'd say, "See, Warren, what did I tell you? You would have lost double the amount. See what I mean?" Her words irked the dealer.

I could see what she meant all right. Most of all I could see that she was beginning to annoy me and without her riding herd over me I might have had a chance to win some big money.

She was unreasonable in other ways, too. At four-thirty in the morning she insisted that I quit and go to sleep. Everybody knows that you're not supposed to walk away from a winning streak. I tried to explain that to her, but she wouldn't listen.

"Now Warren, if you stay up all night you'll be so tired you won't be able to enjoy tomorrow," was what she kept saying.

She wouldn't stop.

There wasn't any point arguing with her, so we went to bed. Unknown to me she stuck a *Do Not Disturb* sign on the door and I wound up sleeping half the next day away, when I could have been winning some money. When I awoke I was alone.

The hundred I had started with was now a hundred and forty. I dressed quickly. If I could get to the casino without Martha I'd be able to really hit them.

When I got there she was waiting for me, smiling. "Warren, you look wonderful, all rested out," she said.

If I'd wanted rest I would have stayed home. I didn't tell her that. She'd never understand.

I played every game there was, poker, dice, blackjack, *chemin de fer,* roulette, and to say that my luck was great would be an understatement of fact. It was phenomenal. From time to time I lost, but I always bounced back. I walked away winning from everything I tried.

Martha hung around my neck like an anchor. At the dice table I made six straight passes and wanted to double up on each one, but I couldn't get rid of Martha.

She was choking me. I couldn't breathe with her around. So to gain a breathing spell I handed her fifty dollars and told her to try her luck elsewhere. I had to promise that I wouldn't increase the size of my bets while she was gone before she agreed to leave.

During the twenty minutes she was gone I met Paul Varig at the dice table. He was a professional gambler. I recognized him immediately, since his photograph had been in the newspapers during a recent Senate crime hearing on gambling. He had pleaded the fifth amendment no less than forty-six times.

He wasn't reluctant to talk to me, however, and ride my winning streak all the way, winding up with eight thousand dollars. Myself, I made two hundred dollars.

Once when I had a lucky run he whispered, "This is unusual pal. You go a little heavier when it's like this."

"Well, I promised Martha," I said. He smiled and shrugged as if to say, *well, I can't play your game for you.*

When Martha returned I introduced him to her. Despite what the newspapers had to say about him being an unsavory character and all, he seemed like a nice guy as far as I was concerned. And he was.

During the rest of the vacation we stuck together and there wasn't any question but that he made the rest of our stay more enjoyable.

At night we'd go to the other hotels for dinner and the shows and his presence was more than enough to insure us a ringside table. People were standing in line, but we'd breeze right through and were treated like some sort of visiting royalty.

I could tell right off that Martha liked him, but he was a gentleman. He never made a pass and that's kind of unusual, since Martha's a genuine beauty.

I'm not saying this because she's my wife and I might be a little prejudiced. Before we were married she was Miss Runner-up in a beauty contest in Oklahoma, so I know what I'm talking about. I guess the real reason for Varig's indifference was that he had all the female companionship he had use for. Some real beauties would smile and wave at him wherever we went.

I got to know Paul Varig well during the rest of my vacation. Once I had convinced Martha that I'd continue to gamble cautiously, she left me alone. I had ample opportunity to study Varig's gambling habits. The one thing I noticed about him that stuck in my mind was that he always took the odds, and that when he felt they were in his favor he played heavily.

He came out winning forty-three thousand dollars during the time we were there, but in all fairness to him, he kept saying, "Warren, bet a little

heavier and you'll grab yourself a bundle."

When Martha and I checked out of the hotel we were ahead a thousand dollars. She was delighted over it. She kept saying, "Warren, it isn't how much you win. It's the fact that you're a winner that's important."

I let it go at that. There wasn't any sense arguing with her. It wouldn't change her point of view anyway.

I didn't see Paul Varig for six months after that. But my head was filled with the good rolls and the points I'd made and how things would be a lot easier for me if I had played the way I wanted to.

I figured it out a few times and realized that if I had only placed bigger bets and doubled up a few times I would have come out winning over a hundred thousand dollars. Thinking about that, the thousand only frustrated me.

The way I saw it, Martha, with her unreasonably cautious attitude and my going along with it, had cost me ninety-nine thousand dollars. I could forgive her almost anything, but ninety-nine thousand dollars is a lot of forgiving and I didn't have all that forgiveness.

Things between us got kind of unpleasant after a while. What made it even worse was that she wanted to spend some of the thousand. She wanted a new winter outfit, a coat, shoes and purse, only I wasn't about to go along with that.

No sir. Since I was the one who'd won the money I figured that I was the one who had the right to spend it any way I wanted. So I told her nothing doing.

Actually, what I said was, "Forget it, Martha." When she insisted that she hadn't had a new coat in five years and she really needed one, I said, "Get lost, Martha," and that was being kind of gentle the way I saw it, since I was out ninety-nine thousand dollars.

Marriage isn't going to hold up with something like that hanging over it. I guess her background had something to do with it, too. Her father was a railroad hand and a heavy drinker back in Oklahoma and from what she'd told me she hadn't exactly lived in the lap of luxury. She'd been working ever since she was fourteen. Maybe that accounted for her cautious attitude toward money.

Anyway, things kept getting worse between us and finally she went off to see her sister in Buffalo for a few weeks. Of course, I knew she was going to do that. You live with a woman for ten years and you get to

know her habits and what will set her off and what will make her do certain things. So it didn't exactly come as a surprise to me when she went off to Buffalo.

I planned it that way, in fact.

This time I had my plan completely worked out. I withdrew the thousand dollar winnings from the bank and caught the first available flight to Puerto Rico. I chose it over Las Vegas because the fare was less and it would leave me with more gambling money.

I called Martha and told her where I was going and that I'd be back in a week. She said, "Good luck, Warren. Have a good time." Frankly I was kind of surprised that she didn't put up a fuss.

I rented a car at the San Juan Airport, checked into a good hotel and that evening those guys down there nearly wiped me out. Everything I touched went sour. I bet right and I couldn't get off more than two or three rolls before I sevened out. So I went against the dice and some bum got hot and I didn't have enough sense to get off his roll.

By twelve o'clock there was a sickness like a rock in my stomach. I went back to my room, shaved, showered, changed my clothes and returned to the gambling room, and this time I tried playing it carefully, betting a dollar or two, no more. When the casino closed I had recouped five hundred dollars.

The next night was different. The dice could do no wrong and as I kept winning, I kept increasing the size of my bets. At one-thirty I left the gambling tables, went back to my room again and realized that I had won eleven thousand dollars. With a bankroll I knew that I had a chance to win the big money. So I returned to the dice tables and in an hour I had lost over a thousand dollars.

There's a theory gamblers have that win or lose it's all the same, just as long as you're playing. It doesn't apply to me. When I lose it bugs me and when I win I feel great. And I had the certain feeling that my luck had run out here.

The next morning I was on a plane back to New York. I went straight to my apartment and found Martha and Paul Varig. They were both sitting in the living room having coffee when I came in and I guess I surprised them as much as they surprised me by being there.

Martha seemed happy to see me. She told me why her visit to her sister had been cut short. Her brother-in-law, a traveling salesman, had to make a trip to

the west coast, and her sister was going along with him, sort of making it a business and pleasure trip. And since Martha didn't want to stay in the apartment by herself she had decided to come home.

Varig had come to see me because he was going back to Las Vegas and he wanted to know if I wanted to go with him. He jokingly explained that the fix had been in on a few college basketball games, he was suspected of it and that the district attorney and certain other officials had made things uncomfortable for him around the metropolitan area. He was off to Las Vegas where the heat would be off.

I didn't tell Martha how much I'd won in Puerto Rico, but when I handed her a thousand dollars and told her to spend it on herself, her eyes lit up. I made one condition, though. I wanted to make this trip to Las Vegas without her. She agreed. I guess the thousand dollars helped her get over her disappointment.

On the plane, after Varig and I had a few drinks, he told me that he'd made a bundle on the basketball games. The fix had been in and he'd arranged it, but he wasn't worried about it. Nobody had enough guts to testify against him, he said.

"The trick is, Warren, you got to bet on the sure thing. That's the only way you can win."

I had heard this statement before. Walk around any racetrack listening to the comments after a race. Listen to the boys who speculate on the stock market. Listen to the winners, listen to the losers.

"When you bet on a sure thing, you win." The statement was elemental, naive and obvious. Frankly, I was a little surprised that I heard it from Paul Varig, but on second thought I could see where a professional gambler might gear his pattern of play to this philosophy as a matter of survival.

By the time we got to Las Vegas I had forgotten all about it. All I wanted was a whack at the dice tables and a good run of luck. That's asking a lot and I knew it.

There was a vast difference in the way Varig and I gambled. I never left the tables, while Varig spent most of his time in the lounge, or sunning himself at the pool. When he did play it was heavily and for short periods. I observed him standing around a table making mental bets for an hour before he placed his first real bet.

He was a cautious man, I thought, as cautious as a gambler could be and still manage to play.

That first day we arrived in Las Vegas at four p.m. By midnight I was ahead twenty thousand dollars. It was all systems go. I made the numbers the easy way and the hard way. When it runs that way all the percentages go out the window. On a hunch I hit three twelves on three consecutive rolls.

Varig came over and we went to the lounge for coffee and a sandwich. I hadn't eaten anything since the meal on the plane.

Varig regarded the huge stack of chips I had piled in the center of the table. "If you're smart, you'll cash those in, go to sleep and check out first thing in the morning," he said.

"There's a chance I can double this."

He laughed. "You've got the fever, Warren. Maybe you can double it. But twenty will get you fifty that if you stick around you'll give it all back."

"You're right," I said, and I quit for the night. He was really a nice guy.

In the morning there was a line at the checkout desk. I waited in the gambling room and grabbed off a little action. In ten minutes play I knew that checking out of the hotel this morning would be a mistake. Twice I sevened out and miraculously the dice rolled off the seven. I was betting ten dollars.

Varig came over. "I thought you'd be on the plane by now," he said.

"There's another one this afternoon," I told him.

"Go on, Warren, make a run for it. You're a winner," he said.

My turn to roll the dice came around. I picked them up and said, "I want to bet twenty thousand."

A curious look appeared on Varig's face. "You're crazy, pal."

There was a small consultation between the pit bosses and one of them said, "All right, Warren." I had a bet.

I caught a seven on the first roll. I had forty thousand dollars. I bet ten dollars on the next roll. My point was eight. I didn't make it.

I had forty thousand dollars.

"You can still make the plane," said Varig.

I didn't answer him.

"Watching you lose it will be too painful," Varig said. "I'm going to get some sun at the pool."

When I saw him three hours later, I had lost it all.

We sat in the coffee shop. I asked him if he could lend me some money, maybe a thousand dollars.

"Forget it," he snorted.

"My luck's going to change. I know you must have heard a thousand guys say the same thing. But I can feel it."

He thought about it a long time. "Well," he said. "I've seen a lot of things happen around a gambling table. I've even seen guys make a comeback. One thing I know for sure. You're going to need more than a thousand if you want to regain a forty thousand dollar loss. The way I figure it you'll need about ten grand."

Nobody was going to give me ten grand. I said, "A thousand is all I need." That sounded like a much more realistic possibility.

He shook his head. "A bad run and you're out of action. You'll lose it. Ten grand is what you need, Warren."

"It would give me a better chance," I said.

He regarded me curiously. "You could lose ten grand as easy as a thousand, Warren, still you never can tell. You might be able to do it."

"I haven't got ten grand. I haven't even got one grand."

He laughed. "If you're hinting that I loan it to you, forget it. I make it a policy never to lend money to gamblers."

"Well," I said. "I guess that's it," and started to rise.

He waved me down. "Take it easy, Warren. Maybe I can introduce you to a guy in Lake Tahoe. He's in the money lending business. But you'll have to come up with some kind of security for ten grand; house, car, stocks, bonds, things like that."

"Nothing," I said.

Varig shrugged and smiled. "So you take the next plane home and you forget about it. You pretend you never owned the forty grand."

"That won't be easy," I said, and studied his face, and wondered what his reaction would be to what I was going to say. "There's a life insurance policy on Martha for twenty thousand dollars. There's a cash equity. Maybe your friend in Lake Tahoe. . ."

He nodded. "Yeah, he'd go for that. Have you got the policy with you?"

"Right here in my pocket," I said, and produced it.

He read it. "Yeah, this is a little more like it. At least it is a sign of good faith. If he gives you ten grand against it, you'll have to pay him fifteen grand for it."

"Five thousand dollars interest? That's a lot of money."

He burst into laughter. "If he gives it to you that's a lot of risk he's taking to earn it. He'll only give you the money on my say-so anyway. In other words I'm guaranteeing your loan. So there's something you've got to tell me. Suppose you lose. How are you going to repay the money?"

"I'm not going to lose."

"I've heard that before, more times than I can count. You still haven't answered my question."

I leaned forward and said quietly, "I'm the beneficiary named on the policy."

He considered what I'd said. "I've been in this racket a long time. I thought I'd seen everything."

I thought it wise to say nothing.

He finished his coffee before continuing. "All right Warren, now I'll take you to my friend in Lake Tahoe, and let me tell you something. The only reason I'm doing it is because of what you just said about being the beneficiary on Martha's life insurance policy."

He spoke in a matter of fact voice. An outsider hearing him would never believe that he was discussing the possibility of my killing Martha to gain twenty thousand dollars in the event that I lost the money I was going to borrow.

But it wasn't going to come to that. I was sure that I was going to win back the money I had lost. If I didn't, I'd cross that bridge, getting rid of Martha, when I came to it.

"When can I see your friend?" I said.

"We'll drive over there now," Varig said.

So here we were, heading for Lake Tahoe. Varig drove. When we were about halfway to our destination, I couldn't believe it when he stopped the car, drew a gun and walked me off the road into a thicket.

"What are you doing?" I said, and couldn't believe what was happening. I found myself saying "why," over and over again.

"Martha has a policy on you for twenty thousand dollars. She's the beneficiary on that one." He winked. "I've been paying the premiums on that one for the last six months."

"You and Martha?" I asked incredulously.

He nodded. "Why not? That kid's got class, only you're not smart enough to see it. You're not even in her league and you were ready to kill her for the policy money."

"I would have won."

"You had to lose. It was a sure thing. The trouble Warren, was that you were playing in a different game and you didn't know it. There were only two players, you and me. Like that there's only one winner and one loser."

"But why did you keep telling me to go home when I was ahead forty thousand dollars?"

He shrugged. "Words. I knew you couldn't do it."

I said, "Now wait a minute!"

He said, "So long," and raised the gun.

MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Readers

For the Greatest Bargain of Your Crime Reading Life Here's a New Treasure Chest of Unusual Pleasures for All Mystery Readers Taken From the Files of Two Great "Uncle" Magazines.

4 BACK COPIES FOR ONLY $2

8 BACK COPIES FOR ONLY $4

IN OUR WAREHOUSE we recently unearthed a very limited supply of two famous and outstanding mystery magazines. Each contains a complete novel by the world-renown ROBERT HART DAVIS, and the remainder of the magazine is full of the very same writers who contribute to *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine.* These two magazines you'll be excited to know are *The Man From Uncle* and its intriguing companion, *The Girl From Uncle.* Remember, all of these stories are brand new, bought exclusively for these magazines, and never reprinted in any form since their original appearance.

WE ARE OFFERING at this time (and only as long as the supply lasts) *four issues for $2.00.* What's even better, if you're really in need of some excellent reading material, give yourself a treat and order *eight* copies. *They are yours for only $4.00.* Didn't we say we've a treasure chest for you to sample and enjoy?

THERE'S ONE CONDITION: you must leave the selection up to us, please. No duplicates will be sent, of course. You'll get as many *Uncle* copies as you order. Send in your coupon now. You'll be guaranteeing yourself countless hours of unparalleled reading pleasure. Allow about a month for delivery. Our guarantee—the wait will be well worthwhile.

RENOWN PUBLICATIONS, INC.
8230 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048

Please send me back copies of the UNCLE magazines. I enclose $2.00 or $4.00 in full payment for copies ordered. Foreign orders in U.S. funds only.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY, STATE, ZIP NO. .....

Please print JUNE 1975

BOOK OF SHADOWS

by

GEORGE C.

CHESBRO

Featuring MONGO FREDERICKSON in A "DIFFERENT" STORY

Some of the finest stories to pass over an editor's desk are often rejected because they do not fit the magazine format. In bringing our readers the best in mystery fiction, as announced some months ago, we have decided to print from time to time stories of extraordinary excellence which do not exactly fit our format. We are pleased in this issue to bring you George C. Chesbro's Mongo Frederickson novelet, "Book of Shadows", in which the dwarf detective meets a grotesque foe; the spirit world itself! Neither the usual detective story nor a mere tale of exorcism, it is more in the tradition of Bram Stoker's DRACULA or Mary Wolstonecraft Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN, for it pits man against the very evil which he himself creates. It is a very dark and very "different" story!

IT HAD BEEN a long day with absolutely nothing accomplished. I'd spent most of it grading a depressing set of midterm papers that led me to wonder what I'd been teaching all semester in my graduate criminology seminar. After that I'd needed a drink.

Instead of doing the perfectly sensible thing and repairing to the local pub, I'd made the mistake of calling my answering service, which informed me there was a real live client waiting for me in my downtown office. The Yellow Pages the man had picked my name out of didn't mention the fact that this particular private detective was a dwarf: one look at me and the man decided he didn't really need a private detective after all.

With my sensitive dwarf ego in psychic shreds, I headed home. I planned to quickly make up for my past sobriety and spend an electronically lobotomized evening in front of the television.

I perked up when I saw the little girl waiting for me outside my apartment. Kathy Marsten was a small friend of mine from 4D, down the hall.

With her blond hair and blue eyes, dressed in a frilly white dress and holding a bright red patent leather purse, she looked positively beatific. I laughed to myself as I recalled that it had taken me two of her seven years to convince her that I wasn't a potential playmate.

"Kathy, Kathy, Kathy!" I said, picking her up and setting her down in a manner usually guaranteed to produce Instant Giggle. "How's my girl today?"

"Hello, Mr. Mongo," she said very seriously.

"Why the good clothes? You look beautiful, but I'd think you'd be out playing with your friends by this time."

"I came here right after school, Mr. Mongo. I've been waiting for you. I was getting afraid I wouldn't see you before my daddy came home. I wanted to ask you something."

Now the tears came. I reached down and brushed them away, suddenly realizing that this was no child's game. "What did you want to ask me, Kathy?"

She sniffled, then regained control of herself in a manner that reminded me of someone much older. "My daddy says that you sometimes help people for money."

"That's right, Kathy. Can I help you?"

Her words came in a rush. "I want you to get my daddy's book of shadows back from Daniel so Daddy will be happy again. But you mustn't tell Daddy. He'd be awful mad at me if he knew I told anybody. But he just *has* to get it back or something terrible will happen. I just know it."

"Kathy, slow down and tell me what a 'book of shadows' is. Who's Daniel?"

But she wasn't listening. Kathy was crying again, fumbling in her red purse. "I've got money for you," she stammered. "I've been saving my allowance and milk money."

Before I could say anything the little girl had taken out a handful of small change and pressed it into my palm. I started to give it back, then stopped when I heard footsteps come up behind me.

"Kathy!" a thin voice said. "There you are!"

The girl gave me one long, piercing look that was a plea to keep her secret. Then she quickly brushed away her tears and smiled at the person standing behind me. "Hi, Daddy! I fell and hurt myself. Mr. Mongo was making me feel better."

I straightened up and turned to face Jim Marsten. He seemed much paler and thinner since I'd last seen him, but perhaps it was my imagination. The fact of the matter was that I knew

Kathy much better than I knew either of her parents. We knew each other's names, occasionally exchanged greetings in the hall, and that was it. Marsten was a tall man, the near side of thirty, prematurely balding. The high dome of his forehead accentuated the dark, sunken hollows of his eye sockets. He looked like a man who was caving in.

"Hello, Mongo," Marsten said.

I absently slipped the money Kathy had given me into my pocket and shook the hand that was extended to me. "Hi, Jim. Good to see you."

"Thanks for taking care of my daughter." He looked at Kathy. "Are you all right now?"

Kathy nodded her head. Her money felt heavy in my pocket; I felt foolish. By the time I realized I probably had no right to help a seven-year-old child keep secrets from her father, Jim Marsten had taken the hand of his daughter and was leading her off down the hall. Kathy looked back at me once and her lips silently formed the word, *please*.

When they were gone I took Kathy's money out of my pocket and counted it. There was fifty-seven cents.

I must have looked shaky. My brother Garth poured me a second double Scotch and brought it over to where I was sitting. I took a pull at it, then set the glass aside and swore.

Garth shook his head. "It can all be explained, Mongo," he said. "There's a rational explanation for everything."

"Is there?" I asked without any real feeling. "Let's hear one."

Someone was calling my name: a child's voice, crying, afraid, a small wave from some dark, deep ocean lapping at the shore of my mind. Then I was running down a long tunnel, slipping and falling on the soft, oily surface, struggling to reach the small, frail figure at the other end. The figure of Kathy seemed to recede with each step I took, and still I ran. Kathy was dressed in a long, flowing white gown, buttoned to the neck, covered with strange, twisted shapes. Suddenly she was before me. As I reached out to take her in my arms she burst into flames.

I sat bolt upright in bed, drenched in sweat. My first reaction was relief when I realized I had only been dreaming. Then came terror: I smelled smoke.

Or thought I smelled smoke. Part of the dream? I started to reach for my cigarettes, then froze. There *was* smoke. I

leaped out of bed, quickly checked the apartment. Nothing was burning. I threw open the door of the apartment and stepped out into the hall. Smoke was seeping from beneath the door of the Marsten's apartment.

I sprinted to the end of the hall and broke the fire box there. Then I ran back and tried the door to 4D. It was locked. I didn't waste time knocking. I braced against the opposite wall, ran two steps forward, kipped in the air and kicked out at the door just above the lock. The door rattled. I picked myself off the floor and repeated the process. This time the door sprung open wide.

The first thing that hit me was the stench. The inside of the apartment, filled with thick, greenish smoke, smelled like a sewer.

There was a bright, furnace glow to my right, coming from the bedroom. I started toward it, then stopped when I saw Kathy lying on the couch.

She was dressed in the same gown I had seen in the dream.

I bent over her. She seemed to be breathing regularly, but was completely unconscious, not responding to either my voice or touch. I picked her up and carried her out into the hall, laid her down on the rug and went back into the apartment.

There was nothing I could do there. I stood in the door of the bedroom and gazed in horror at the bed that had become a funeral pyre. The naked bodies of Jim and Becky Marsten were barely discernible inside the deadly ring of fire. The bodies, blackened and shriveling, were locked together in some terrible and final act of love. And death.

"They were using combustible chemicals as part of their ritual," Garth said, lighting a cigarette and studying me. "They started fooling with candles and the room went up. It's obvious."

"Is it? The fire was out by the time the Fire Department got there. And there wasn't that much damage to the floor."

"Typical of some kinds of chemical fires, Mongo. You know that."

"I saw the fire: it was too bright, too even. And I did hear Kathy's voice calling me. She was crying for help."

"In your dream?"

"In my dream."

My brother Garth is a cop. He took a long time to answer, and I sensed that he was embarrassed. "The mind plays tricks, Mongo."

I had a few thoughts on that

subject: I washed them away with a mouthful of Scotch.

"Excuse me, Doctor. How's the girl? Kathy Marsten?"

The doctor was Puerto Rican, frail, and walked with a limp. He had a full head of thick, black hair and large, brown eyes that weren't yet calloused over by the pain one encounters in a New York City hospital. He was a young man. The tag on his white smock said his name was Rivera. He looked somewhat surprised to find a dwarf standing in front of him.

"Who are you?"

"My name's Frederickson."

The eyes narrowed. "I've seen your picture. They call you Mongo. Ex-circus performer, college professor, private—"

"I asked you how the girl was."

"Are you a relative?"

"No. Friend of the family. I brought her in."

He hesitated, then led me to a small alcove at the end of the corridor. I didn't like the sound of the way he walked and held his head: too sad, a little desperate.

"My name is Rivera," he said. "Juan Rivera."

"I saw the name tag, Doctor."

"Kathy is dying."

Just like that. I passed my hand over my eyes. "Of what?"

Rivera shrugged his shoulders. It was an odd gesture, filled with helplessness and bitter irony. "We don't know," he said, his eyes clouding. "There's no sign of smoke inhalation, which, of course, was the first thing we looked for. Since then we've run every conceivable test. Nothing. There's no sign of physical injury. She's just . . . *dying*. All the machines can tell us is that her vital signs are dropping at an alarming rate. If the drop continues at its present rate, Kathy Marsten will be dead in two to three days."

"She hasn't regained consciousness?"

"No. She's in a deep coma."

"Can't you operate?"

Juan Rivera's laugh was short, sharp, bitter, belied by the anguish in his eyes. "Operate on *what*? Don't you understand? Modern medicine says there's nothing wrong with that girl. She's merely dying."

Rivera swallowed hard. "There must be something in her background: an allergy, some obscure hereditary disease. That information is vital." He suddenly reached into his hip pocket and drew out his wallet. "You're a private detective. I want to hire you to find some relative of Kathy's that knows something about her medical history."

I held up my hand. "No thanks. I only take on one client at a time."

Rivera looked puzzled. "You won't help?"

"The girl hired me to find something for her. I figure that covers finding a way to save her life. Do you still have the gown she was wearing when I brought her in?"

"The one with the pictures?"

"Right. I wonder if you'd give it to me."

"Why?"

"I'd rather not say right now, Dr. Rivera. I think the symbols on that gown mean something. They could provide a clue to what's wrong with Kathy."

"They're designs," he said somewhat impatiently. "A child's nightgown. What can it have to do with Kathy's illness?"

"Maybe nothing. But I won't know for sure unless you give it to me."

"Hypnosis."

"Hypnosis?! C'mon, Garth. You're reaching."

"Trauma, then. After all, she did watch her parents burn to death."

"Maybe. She was unconscious when I found her."

"God knows what else she was forced to watch."

"And take part in," I added.

"Assuming she did see her parents die, don't you think that—along with everything else—might not be enough to shock a girl to death?"

"I don't know, Garth. You're the one with all the explanations."

"God, Mongo, you don't believe that stuff Daniel told you?!"

"I believe the Marstens believed. And Daniel."

"You're right, Mongo. They are occult symbols."

I watched Dr. Uranus Jones as she continued to finger the satin gown, examining every inch of it. Uranus was a handsome women in her early

fifties—good looking enough to have carried on a string of affairs with a procession of lab assistants twenty years her junior, or so rumor had it. Her gray-streaked blond hair was drawn back into a ponytail, which made her look younger.

The walls of her university office were covered with astronomical charts, many of which she had designed herself. It was an appropriate decor for the office of one of the world's most prominent astronomers. But I wasn't there to discuss astronomy.

Uranus had a rather interesting dual career. As far as I knew, I was the only one of Uranus' colleagues at the university who knew that Uranus was also a top astrologer and medium, with a near legendary reputation in the New York occult underground.

"What do they mean?"

"They look like symbols for the ascending order of demons," she said quietly.

"What does it mean as far as the Marstens are concerned?"

Uranus took a long time to answer. "My guess is that the Marstens were witches practicing the black side of their craft. I'd say they were into demonology and Satanism, and they were trying to summon up a demon. Probably Baliel, judging from the symbols on this gown. From what you've told me, I'd speculate that the Marstens were using a ritual that rebounded on them. The rebound killed them."

"Rebound?"

"The evil. It rebounded and killed them. They weren't able to control the power released by the ritual. That's the inherent danger of ceremonial magic."

"What 'power'?"

"The power of Baliel. I assume that's who they were trying to summon. He killed them before they could exercise the necessary control."

I studied Uranus in an attempt to see if she was joking. There wasn't a trace of a smile on her face. "Do you believe that, Uranus?"

She avoided my eyes. "I'm not a ceremonial magician, Mongo."

"That's not an answer."

"It wasn't meant to be. You asked about the symbols on the robe, and I'm responding in the context of ceremonial magic. I'm describing to you a system of belief. It's up to you to decide whether that system could have anything to do with the fact that Kathy Marsten is dying. It's your responsibility to choose what avenue to pursue, and, from what I understand, you don't have much time."

I wasn't sure there was a choice. According to Doctor

Juan Rivera, the practitioners of the system called medicine had just about played out their string. I risked nothing but making a fool out of myself. Kathy had considerably more to lose. There was a sudden ringing in my ears.

"All right. Within the context of ceremonial magic, why is Kathy dying?"

Uranus looked at me for a long time, then said: "Baliel is claiming a bride."

"Come again."

"The gown: it means that the child was to be a part of the ritual. My guess is that her parents were offering her up to Baliel in exchange for whatever it is they wanted. He killed her parents, and now he's taking her."

"You're saying that Kathy is possessed?"

"Within the context of ceremonial magic, yes. And she will have to be exorcised if you hope to save her. To do that, you will need to know the *exact* steps in the ritual the Marstens were using. Needless to say, that's not something you're likely to find in the public library. And I don't mean that to sound flippant. Assuming that such a ritual does exist, it would have taken the Marstens years to research from some of the rarest manuscripts in the world."

The ringing in my ears was growing louder. I shook my head in an attempt to clear it. It didn't do any good. "God, Uranus," I whispered, "this is the Twentieth Century. I only have a little time. How can I justify using it to chase . . . demons?"

"You can't, Mongo. Not in your belief system. Because demons don't exist in your belief system. But they did in the Marstens, and Kathy Marsten is dying."

"Yes," I said distantly. "Kathy Marsten is dying."

"Consider the possibility that you are what you believe. What you believe effects you. The witch and the ceremonial magician perceive evil in personal terms. Baliel, for example. Most men today prefer other names for evil . . Buchenwald, My Lai."

"She was talking about the mind of man," I said, "That's where the demons are. It's where they've always been. The question is whether oo not evil can be personified. Can it be made to assume a shape? Can it be controlled?"

Garth shook his head impatiently. "That's all crazy talk, Mongo. You're too close to it now. Give it some more time and you'll know it's crazy. "There's an explanation for everything that happened. There

aren't any such things as demons, and you damn well know it."

"Of course there aren't any such things as demons," I said, lifting my glass. "Let's drink on that."

"Uranus, what's a 'book of shadows'?"

She looked surprised. "A book of shadows is a witch's diary. It's a record of spells, omens. It's a very private thing, and is usually seen only by members of the witch's coven."

"A few hours before the fire Kathy Marsten asked me to get back her father's book of shadows. She said it had been taken by a man named Daniel."

Something moved in the depths of Uranus' eyes. "I know of Daniel," she said quietly. "He's a ceremonial magician."

"Meaning precisely what?" I asked.

"A man who has great control over his own mind, and the minds of others. Some would say the ceremonial magician can control matter, create or destroy life. The ceremonial magician stands on the peak of the mountain called the occult. He is a man who has achieved much. He works alone, and he is dangerous. If he took someone's book of shadows, it was for a reason."

"Then there could have been bad blood between this Daniel and the Marstens?"

"If not before Daniel took the book, then certainly after."

I didn't want to ask the next question. I asked it anyway. "Do you think one of these ceremonial magicians could start a fire without actually being in the room?"

"Yes," Uranus said evenly. "I think so."

"I want to talk to this Daniel."

"He won't talk to you, Mongo. You'll be wasting your time."

"You get me to him and let me worry about the conversation."

A Philadelphia bank seemed like an odd place to look for a ceremonial magician. But then nobody had claimed that Daniel could change lead into gold, and even ceremonial magicians had to eat. It looked like this particular magician was eating well. He was sitting in a bank vice president's chair.

He looked the part; that is, he looked more like a bank vice president than a master of the occult arts, whatever such a master looks like. Maybe I'd been expecting Orson Welles. In any case, he matched the description Uranus had given me; about six feet, early forties, close-cropped, steely gray hair with matching eyes. He wore a conservatively cut, gray-striped

suit. There was a Christmas Club sign to one side of his desk, and beside that a name plate that identified him as Mr. Richard Bannon.

I stopped at the side of the desk and waited for him to look up from his papers. "Yes, sir?" It was an announcer's voice, deep, rich and well-modulated.

"Daniel?"

I looked for a reaction. There wasn't any. The gray eyes remained impassive, almost blank, as though he were looking straight through me. I might have been speaking a foreign language. He waited a few seconds, then said: "Excuse me?"

"You are Daniel," I said. "That's your witch name. I want to talk to you."

I watched his right hand drop below the desk for a moment, then resurface. I figured I had five to ten seconds, and I intended to use every one of them. "You listen good," I said, leaning toward him until my face was only inches from his. "There's a little girl dying a couple of hours away from here. If I even *suspect* you had anything to do with it, I'm going to come down on you. Hard. For starters, I'm going to make sure the stockholders of this bank find out about your hobbies. Then, if that doesn't make me feel better, maybe I'll kill you."

Time was up. I could feel the bank guard's hand pressing on my elbow. Daniel suddenly raised his hand. "It's all right, John," he said, looking at me. "I pressed the button by mistake. Dr. Frederickson is a customer."

The hand came off my elbow, there was a murmured apology, then the sound of receding footsteps. I never took my eyes off Daniel. He rose and gestured toward an office behind him. "Follow me, please."

I followed him into the softly lit, richly carpeted office. He closed the door and began to speak almost immediately. "You are to take this as a threat," he said in a voice barely above a whisper. "I know who you are; your career is familiar to me. I do not know how you know of me; I know of no person who would have dared tell you about me. But no matter. There is absolutely nothing—*nothing*—you can do to me. But I can . . . inflict. You will discover that to your surprise and sorrow if you came to trifle with me."

It was an impressive speech, delivered as it was in a soft monotone. I smiled. "I want to ask a couple of questions. You answer them right and you can go back to changing people into frogs, or whatever it is you do."

"I will answer nothing."

"Why did you steal Jim Marsten's book of shadows?"

Daniel blinked. That was all, but from him I considered it a major concession. "You have a great deal of information, Dr. Frederickson. I'm impressed. Who have you been speaking to?"

"What do you know about the girl? Kathy Marsten?"

His eyes narrowed. "Why?" Suddenly he paled. "Is that the little girl you—"

"She's dying," I said bluntly. "Fast."

His tongue darted out and touched his lips. "What are you talking about?"

I told him. His impassive, stony facade began to crack before my eyes. He ended standing across the room, staring out into the bank's parking lot. Once I thought I saw his shoulders heave, but I couldn't be sure. His reaction wasn't exactly what I'd expected. He asked me about my role, and I told him that, too.

"I will need help," he said distantly. Then he turned and looked directly at me. "I will need *your* help. There is no time to get anyone else. We must leave immediately. There are things I must get."

"Daniel, or Bannon, or whatever you call yourself, what the hell is this all about?"

"Kathy Marsten is my neice,"

he said after a long pause. "Becky Marsten is—was—my sister."

"Then I'd say you have some explaining to do. Do you know why Kathy is dying?"

"I owe you no explanations," he said evenly. He studied me for a moment, then added: "But I will explain anyway, because the time will come when I will ask you to do exactly as I say, when I say it, with no discussion and no questions."

"You're out of your mind. Why should I agree to do that?"

"Because you love Kathy and you want to save her life. In order to do that you and I must touch a dimension of existence the Christians call hell. To do

that and survive you will have to do exactly as I say."

I nodded. I hoped it looked non-commital. "I'm listening."

Daniel's words came rapidly now, in an almost mechanical voice. He was obviously a man in a hurry, and I could tell his mind was elsewhere.

"I don't know the extent of your knowledge about witchcraft," he said, "but witchcraft is undoubtedly not what you think it is. It is a religion: a very old religion—an Earth religion. The Marstens and the Bannons have practiced witchcraft for generations. You will find witches in every walk of life."

For a moment I thought I saw him smile. He continued: "Some witches—some magicians, even become bank vice presidents. For most of the Blessed, witchcraft and magic are a means to higher wisdom, toward becoming a better person. But there *is* a dark side to it, as there is to every other religion. I'm not sure you're familiar with the Inquisition, not to mention the Salem witch trials where human beings were burned alive."

He paused, then went on: "In any case, Jim Marsten became interested in the black arts, in demonology, about two years ago. He was warned of the possible consequences to him and to his family. He chose to ignore these warnings. At a certain point I tried to get my sister to leave Jim, but she had already been corrupted by the dreams he had laid out for her. Then I discovered that they intended to try to summon the demon Baliel. That ceremony involves the spiritual sacrifice of a child, and I knew that child would be Kathy.

"I knew there was no way I could reason with them—they were beyond that. But I could stop them, and I did: or I thought I did. I knew there was one place, and only one place, where the ceremony would have been recorded."

"The book of shadows," I whispered.

"That's right. A witch's holiest book. I took it."

"How?"

"How I do what I do is not important. Please remember that. What is important is that Jim and Becky apparently tried to proceed without the exact ritual in hand. They paid for it with their lives. Baliel was released into our dimension and he is sucking Kathy's life away from her."

It was crazy. Maybe I was going crazy. I heard myself asking: "How do you know you can succeed where the Marstens failed? What is your power? And where does it lie?"

"First, I know the ritual. That is absolutely essential for the exorcism." Again, there was a fleeting grimace around his mouth that might have been a half smile. "I am a ceremonial magician, Dr. Frederickson. You come from an academic background, and you understand that to move up in your world requires study, perseverance . . . and talent. The same holds true in mine. If you wish, you may think of a ceremonial magician as a witch with a Ph. D."

I tried to think of something to say and couldn't. I'd run out of options: I'd called Dr. Rivera that morning and been told that Kathy was now perilously near death. So I was along for the ride with a ceremonial magician, straddling a nightmare train of terror that I couldn't stop.

And I knew I was going to do anything the man called Daniel asked me to do.

AT EXACTLY twenty minutes of midnight, as instructed, I parked my car across from the hospital and got out. I lifted Bannon's knapsack from the rear seat, strapped it on my back, then headed across the street. I went around to the back of the hospital and started climbing the fire escape that would take me to Kathy's room, where I had left Bannon four hours before.

I stopped at the third floor, leaned over the steel railing and peered into the window on my right. There was a small night light on over the bed and I could see Kathy's head sticking up above the covers of her bed. Her face was as white as the sheet tucked up under her chin.

Bannon was lying on the floor beside the bed. He was stripped to the waist. His eyes were closed and his breathing was deep and regular. Sweat was pouring off his body, running in thick rivulets to soak into the towels he had placed under him.

Suddenly the door opened and a young, pretty nurse stepped into the room. Bannon was in silent motion even as the nurse reached for the light switch. He rolled in one fluid motion which carried him under the bed. He quickly reached out, wiped the floor with the towels, then drew them in after him.

The night nurse went up to Kathy's bed and drew back the covers. It was then that I could see a series of wires and electrodes attached to her arms and chest. The nurse felt Kathy's forehead, then checked what must have been a battery of instruments on the other side of

the bed, out of my line of vision.

She gave what appeared to be a satisfied nod, recorded the information on a clipboard at the foot of the bed, then turned out the lights and left the room. I tapped on the window.

Bannon emerged from the beneath the bed. He was no longer sweating, but he looked pale and haggard, like a man who had finished a marathon wrestling match. He came to the window and opened it. I climbed through. He immediately began removing the knapsack from my shoulders with deft fingers.

"What time is it?" he croaked in a hoarse voice.

I glanced at the luminous dial on my watch. "Five minutes to twelve."

"We must hurry. The ceremony must begin at exactly midnight. Your watch shows the exact time?"

"Yeah. I checked it out a half hour ago." I was beginning to have second thoughts, to feel like the face on the front page of the morning's editions of some of the country's more sensational tabloids. "What happens if someone else shows up?"

"This is not the time to think about that." He paused, then added: "I think we will have time. The nurses have noted an improvement in Kathy's condition."

I resisted the impulse to clap my hands. "If she's better, what are we doing here?"

Bannon grunted. "She only seems better because I made it appear that way. But the effect is short-lived. Baliel must be driven from her mind. Now, let's get busy."

Bannon quickly opened the knapsack and emptied its contents on the floor. There was a black, hooded robe, a dagger with occult symbols carved into the ivory handle, two slender black candles in pewter candleholders. In addition there was a charred stick, a heavy, lead cup, and numerous, small containers which I assumed contained incense.

The last object out of the sack was a thick volume of papers bound between two engraved metal covers. The symbols inscribed on the covers were the same as those I had seen on Kathy's gown. It was Jim Marsten's book of shadows.

Bannon donned the robe, then opened a small container filled with blue powder. He bent over and spilled the powder out in a thin stream, forming a large circle around the bed. When he had completed that he drew a second, smaller circle at the foot of the bed, on a tangent with the first circle.

In his costume, he seemed a completely different man. No longer did there seem to be any relationship between the banker and the man—the witch—before me. He was no longer Bannon. He was Daniel.

"Time?" he asked, in a strange hollow voice.

"One minute of."

He placed the candles on either side of the foot of the bed and lit them. "You must stand with me inside the second circle," he said as he arranged the other items in front of him. "No matter what happens, remain inside the circle." He picked up the book of shadows and opened it to a section near the back, then handed it to me.

The book was much heavier than one would have suspected from looking at it. The metal was cold. The writing, in purple ink, looked like a series of child's scrawls. It was completely illegible to me. "Turn the page quickly when I nod my head," Daniel continued. "And remember *not* to step out of the circle—not under any circumstances."

"Look, Daniel—"I started to say.

"No," he said sharply, turning his head away from me. I tried to look at his face beneath the hood and couldn't find it. "There is no time for discussion. Simply do as I say. If you do not, you may die. Remember that."

I allowed myself to be led into the circle, and I held the book out in front me, slightly to the side so that Daniel could read it in the dim glow from the candles and night light. Daniel picked up the dagger and held it out stiffly in front of him while he removed a single egg from the pocket of his robe and placed it carefully on a spot equidistant between the two candles. Then he began to chant:

"Amen, ever and forever, glory the and power the, Kingdom the is Thine for, evil from us deliver, But–"

It was a few moments before I realized that Daniel was reciting The Lord's Prayer backwards. I felt a chill. The book of shadows seemed to be gaining weight, and my arms had begun to tremble. I gripped the book even tighter.

Daniel finished the inverted prayer. He stiffened, described a pentagram in the air with his arm, then stuck his dagger into the middle of it. Finally he placed his left palm in the center of the book.

"I command thee, O Book Of Shadows, be useful unto me, who shall have recourse for the success of this matter. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost! In the name of

Yahweh and Allah! In the name of Jesus Christ, let this demon come forth to be banished!"

He turned slowly, taking care to remain in the circle, continuing to describe pentagrams in the air. My eyes were drawn inexorably to the candles: there was no draft in the room, and yet I was positive I had seen them flicker.

"Baliel! Hear me where thee dwell! Restore the sanctity of this virgin child! Leave us without delay! Enter this phial! Enter this phial! Enter this phial!"

There was no question: the candle flames were flickering. Daniel leaned over the book and began to chant from it. It was all gibberish to me, but delivered as it was in a low, even voice, the precisely articulated words gripped my mind, flashing me back over the centuries.

Daniel finished abruptly and stabbed the center of the book three times. Kathy's head began to glow with blue-white light.

I blinked hard, but the halo remained. There was an intense pain in my chest, and I suddenly realized that I had been holding my breath. I let it out slowly. Something was hammering on the inside of my skull. Fear.

Daniel pointed with the tip of the dagger toward the egg. "Enter this phial! Enter this phial! Enter this phial!"

The light flashed, then leaped from Kathy's head to the ceiling where it pulsated and shimmered like ball lightning. And then the room was filled with an almost unbearable stench, like some fetid gas loosed from the bowels of hell.

The light had begun to glow. Daniel folded his arms across his chest and bowed his head. "Go in peace unto your place, Baliel," he whispered. Then came the nod of the head. Somehow I remembered to turn the page.

There was more chanting that I couldn't understand, delivered in the same, soft voice. There was a different quality to Daniel's voice now, a note of triumph. He finished the chant, paused, then whispered: "May there be peace between me and thee. Baliel, go in peace unto—"

Suddenly the door flew open and the lights came on. I wheeled and froze. There was a ringing in my ears. Doctor Juan Rivera stood in the doorway.

"What in God's name—?"

I started toward him, but suddenly Daniel's hand was on my shoulder, holding me firm. "Stay!" he commanded.

Daniel was halfway across

the room when the sphere of light began to glow brighter. He stopped and stiffened, thrusting both arms straight out into the air in Rivera's direction. No word was spoken, and Daniel was still at least ten feet away from the door. Still, Doctor Rivera slumped against the wall, then fell to the floor unconscious.

The light skittered across the ceiling, stopped directly above the white-coated figure. Daniel leaped the rest of the distance, at the same time digging in his robe. He came up with another container. He ripped it open and began to spray a blue powder over Rivera.

There was a sharp hissing sound and the light shot from the ceiling to Daniel's head and shoulders. Daniel stiffened, then arched backward and fell hard against the floor where he writhed in pain, his head now glowing brightly.

"Jesus!" I murmured, stepping out of the circle and starting toward him. "Oh, Jesus!"

"Stay back!"

Instinctively I made a cross with my forearms, holding them out in front of me like some talisman. "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!"

And then I was beside him. I grabbed hold of the material of his sleeve and dragged him back across the floor, inside the circle. Again there was a hissing sound and the light shot to the ceiling. I continued to whisper: "Jesus!"

Daniel's voice, tortured and twisted out of shape now, came up under my own, like some strange, vocal counterpoint.

"Go in peace, Baliel. Let there be peace between thee and me. Enter the phial!"

There was an almost blinding flash, and the light expanded, then contracted, shooting in a needle shaft over our heads and into the egg. The egg seemed to explode silently in slow motion, its pieces smoking, then dissolving in the air.

Kathy Marsten suddenly sat bolt upright in bed. Her eyes widened, and for a moment I thought she was going to speak. Her mouth moved, but no sound came out. Then she collapsed over on her side. I tasted terror.

"It's over," Daniel said. I could barely hear him.

It was a long time before Garth could bring himself to say anything. "You claim you saw all this?!"

"Yes."

There was another long pause, then: "One of three things has to be true. For openers, either you've really fallen out of your tree, or you were hypnotized. I like the hypnosis

theory best. Like I said before, it would also explain the girl's reaction."

"Really? How?" I found I wasn't much interested in "logical" explanations.

"I'm willing to buy the notion that this Bannon–or 'Daniel' –had something on the ball mentally. He hypnotized the girl, probably with her parents' help, and put her into a deep coma. It can be done, you know. Then he got you up into that room and ran the same number on you. Remember, you said the girl seemed to be coming out of it anyway."

"Why?"

"Huh?"

"Why? What was Daniel's motive? What you're saying simply doesn't make any sense. And don't try to tell me it does."

"How the hell should I know what his motive was?" Garth said impatiently. It was the cop in him coming out: he was having a hard time making his case. He went on: "Daniel was obviously crazy. Crazy people don't need motives for doing crazy things."

"What about Rivera?"

"What about him?"

"He doesn't remember a thing. He called me the next day to tell me Kathy had made what he called a miraculous recovery. I pumped him a little, gently. Nothing. I don't think he even knows he passed out."

"Which brings us to the third possibility."

"I can't wait to hear this one."

Garth paused for emphasis. "You were never up in that room, Mongo."

"No kidding?"

"Goddam it, you listen to me and listen to me good! It never happened! That business in the room never happened!" He paused and came up for breath. He continued a little more calmly. "You didn't hear yourself on that phone: I did. I'd say you were damn near hysterical. When I got there I found you unconscious next to the phone booth."

"Back to square one: I fell out of my tree."

"Why not? It happens to the best of us from time to time. You were under a lot of pressure. You'd seen two neighbors burn to death, saved a little girl only to feel that she was in danger of dying. That, along with the witchcraft business, pushed you over the brink for just a few moments."

"Who pushed Daniel?" I said as calmly as I could. Garth was beginning to get to me. I was beginning to feel he had a specific purpose in mind, and I was hoping he'd get to it.

"Nobody pushed Daniel. Daniel fell. It's as simple as that. It blew your circuits. I think you dreamed the rest

when you passed out after calling me."

"But you must admit that Daniel was real."

Garth gave a wry smile. "Of course Daniel was real. The coroner's office can testify to that. No, what I personally think may have happened is that he committed suicide. The death of his sister, his niece's illness, unhinged him. Unfortunately, you happened to see him fall and the shock . . . upset your nerves. Made you imagine the whole thing."

Suddenly I knew the point of the conversation. "You didn't include me in your report, did you?"

He shook his head. "Only as the caller . . . a passerby." He looked up. "You start telling people you tried to break into–or did break into–that hospital and you'll end up with charges filed against you. There goes your license. Second, I don't want to see my brother locked up in the Bellevue loony bin."

"You're not so sure, are you, Garth?"

He avoided my eyes. "It doesn't make any difference, Mongo. You said the materials Daniel used are gone."

I GLANCED at my watch and was amazed to find that only twelve minutes had passed since I'd climbed through the window. Daniel had gotten slowly to his feet and laid Kathy back on her pillow. He still wore the robe, and no part of his flesh was visible.'

"We . . . must bring everything out with us," he whispered in a strained voice. "Clean . . . everything."

There was no time to think, just do. I quickly checked Doctor Rivera. He was still unconscious, but breathing regularly. I heard footsteps outside in the hall. They paused by the door and I tensed. After a few seconds the footsteps moved on.

I used Daniel's towels to erase all traces of the blue powder he had used. When I finished I found him waiting for me by the window. He had replaced the objects in the knapsack and held that in one hand, the book of shadows in the others. I still could not see any part of his face or hands.

He handed me the knapsack, then motioned for me to go through the window first. I climbed through, balanced on the ledge outside, then swung over onto the fire escape. Then I turned back and offered my hand. He shook his head.

I frowned. "Don't you want to take that robe off?"

He shook his head again. "Go ahead," he mumbled. "I'll be right behind you." There was something in his voice that

frightened me, but I turned and started down the fire escape.

"Frederickson!"

The texture of the voice—the despair and terror—spun me around like a physical force. He was suspended in space, one hand gripping the fire escape railing, the other holding the book of shadows out to me. Both hands were covered with blood.

"Destroy," he managed to say. *"Destroy everything."*

The book of shadows dropped to the grate and I grabbed for Daniel. His hood slipped off, revealing a head covered with blood.

The ceremonial magician Daniel was bleeding from every pore in his body: Blood poured from his nose, his mouth, his ears. His eyes.

And then he was gone, dropping silently into the darkness to be crushed on the pavement below.

Totally devoid of rational thought, a series of primitive screams bubbling in my throat, I picked up the book of shadows and half fell, half ran down the fire escape. I dropped the last few feet and raced to the black shrouded body. It didn't take me more than a moment to confirm that the hospital would be of no use to Daniel.

I was the one who needed help.

I vaguely remembered a pay telephone booth across the street from the hospital. I raced down the alleyway toward the street, pausing only long enough to hurl the knapsack into one of the hospital's huge garbage disposal bins. It was only as I neared the street that I realized I was still holding the book of shadows.

I wouldn't remember telephoning my brother, or passing out."

I GOT UP from the chair and pretended to stretch. "Okay, Garth, it's over. And if that's it, I'm going to throw you out. I've got a long drive to Pennsylvania tomorrow. I've traced some of Kathy's relatives."

"Witches?"

"Sure. But I wouldn't worry about it. The coven leader also happens to be mayor of the town. His brother is chief of police. A nice, typical, American family."

Garth's eyes narrowed. "You're kidding."

"No, I'm not kidding."

Garth rose and walked to the door where he turned and looked at me. "You sure you're all right?"

"Garth, get the hell out."

"Yeah. I'll see you."

"I'll see you."

I closed the door behind Garth, then went into the bed-

room and sat down on the bed. I took a deep breath, then opened the drawer in the night stand and brought out the book of shadows. It was still covered with Daniel's bloody prints.

I brushed dirt off one corner and opened it to the pages Daniel had read from. The writing was still totally incomprehensible to me. But Daniel had been able to read it. Undoubtedly, there were others.

I wondered what some of my colleagues at the university would think of the book of shadows, of Baliel. Summoning up a demon would make an interesting research project.

I glanced at the night stand and the small pile of change there. Fifty-seven cents.

I ripped the pages out of the book, tossed them in a metal wastebasket and threw a lighted match after them. There was nothing unusual about the flame.

MIKE SHAYNE Presents

Next Month's Headliners

THE CASUAL KILLERS by BRETT HALLIDAY

The New Mike Shayne Novelet

THE APPLE ORCHARD MURDER CASE by JOSEPH PAYNE BRENNEN

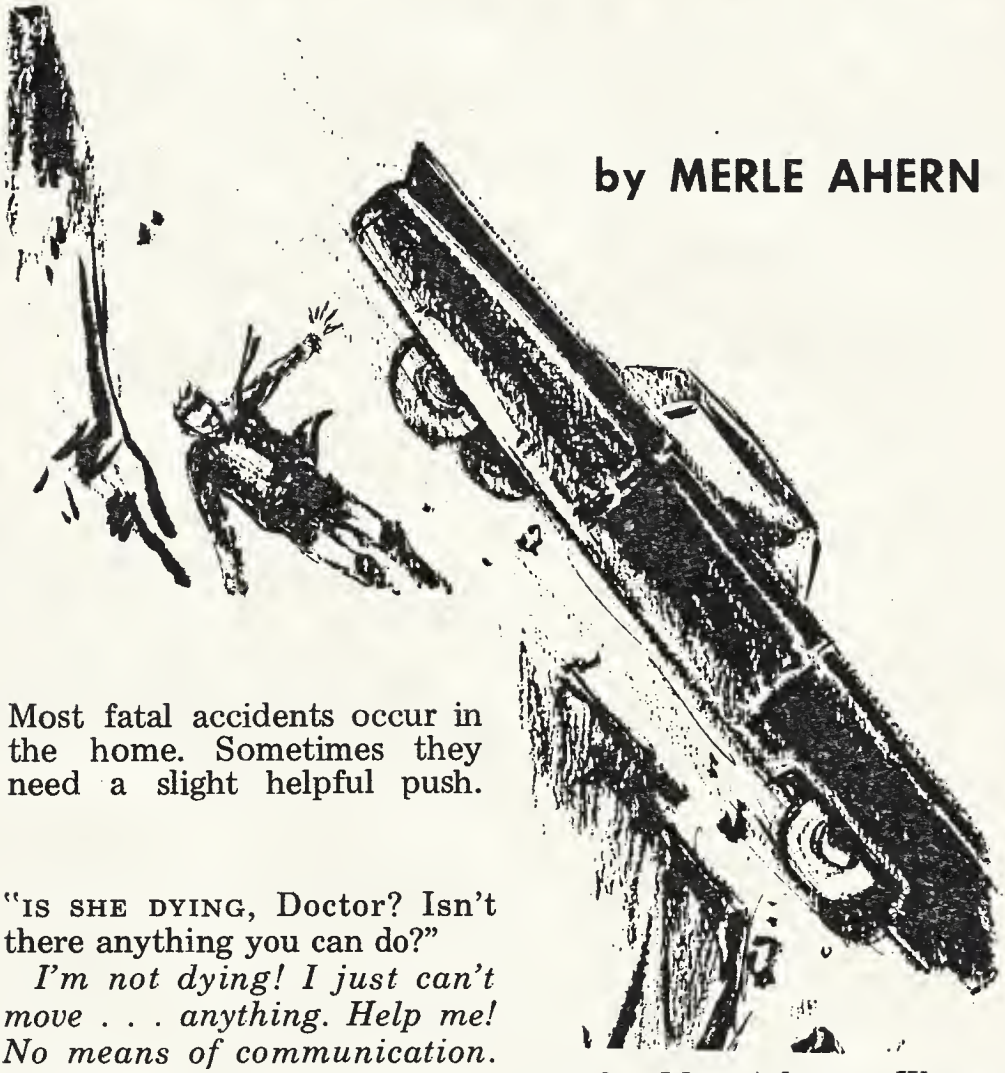
A Lucius Leffing Thriller

ESCAPE by MAX VAN DERVEER

A New Exciting Short Story

Lack of Communication

by MERLE AHERN



Most fatal accidents occur in the home. Sometimes they need a slight helpful push.

"IS SHE DYING, Doctor? Isn't there anything you can do?"

I'm not dying! I just can't move . . . anything. Help me! No means of communication. Without communication I am still me. I'm not a thing. I'm something to you, aren't I, Doctor? Can't you hear my heart beat?

"Her heartbeat is very strong. However, I must caution you against expecting too much, Mr. Adams. We are doing everything possible."

Please, whatever is possible. I don't care what you do to my body, just let me live.

"My mother seems barely alive, Doctor. She hasn't moved since they brought her home.

Not since the—er . . . accident."

Accident! Oh God, Krishna, Buddha, Anyone who will hear! Help me to speak. I must tell my son it was no accident. Paul tried to murder me! I must live.

"It's a wonder your mother lived through the accident. She sustained multiple injuries from the fall. This catatonic state—although that is not quite the precise term—is often brought on by the accompanying shock."

Shock! Wouldn't anyone be shocked if their husband tried to kill them? I must tell Jimmy his stepfather . . .

"My stepfather is in a state of shock, also, Doctor. Of course, I don't mean like hers. He keeps dragging in here, cast and all, just to see if she is still alive. He blames himself, says he yelled at her to jump when the car went out of control. Could you give him something to calm him? I can't seem to get him to lie down and get off his broken leg."

Broken leg? You didn't time it quite right, did you, Paul? So your leg's in a cast. That's the thumping sound I hear near my bed at times. My God, keep him away from me!

"Yes, he needs to keep off that leg. We should keep him away from here. Tell him we'll call him if there is any change in his wife's condition. You should get some rest also, Mr. Adams. We'll call you."

I wish I could call, talk, scream, anything. Jimmy. Jimmy. Listen. Listen! I'm trying . . .

"I thought my mother was trying to speak, Doctor. I guess it was just her breath through her poor, broken mouth. It's so terrible . . . her lying there . . . not even a moan . . . not a sound."

Without sound am I still a person? Meditate on one hand clapping, son. That is the sound I make. I am going crazy! Inside I scream! I shall lose my mind.

"Her mind, Doctor? If she lives, will there be damage to her brain? Lying so long like this. I've heard something about the brain, after so much time, brain damage?"

My brain is not broken, Jimmy, just my body. But what good is my brain if I can't let you know I am here . . . inside this soft yet rigid casing?

"Oh, no. The rigidity, you see, is muscular. What you have heard is that the brain is damaged if it goes too long without oxygen. Her brain is receiving blood and with it —oxygen. Maybe it would be easier to understand if you can think of her as in a fainting spell, except that she is not limp but rigid."

Rigid. Paralyzed. If I could only move something, even my eyes. I could blink once for yes and twice for no. One if by land. Two if by sea. I am going crazy! Doctor, you have to do something!

"God, Doctor can't you do something? I can't stand to see her this way. My mother . . ."

Mother is not a name. It's a verb, an action verb, and I have no action I can make. To mother is to comfort, to praise, to scold. Oh, my son, if I could just hold you, comfort you. If a mother can not mother, she is not a mother. I sound like Gertrude Stein. Sound like. I don't sound. My God, I am crazy! I've forgotten how to pray. Help me, Lord!

"With the Lord's help, we are doing all we can for your mother, Mr. Adams. I suggest you get some rest."

Yes, rest, my son. I am no good to you this way. I can't mother. I can't reach you. Is life, then, communication? I am dead. I am lying in my own, rigid coffin of flesh, buried above the ground. No! No! I will not give up! I must tell Jimmy that his stepfather . . ."

"Your stepfather is at the door again, Mr. Adams. I will be in in a minute to see him. I suggest you help him back to his room."

You warned me, didn't you, Jimmy? Keep Paul in his room. Away from me. I thought Paul loved me. You said all he wanted was my money.

"Money is no object, as you know, Doctor. You'll call us immediately if there is any change?"

There will be change, Jimmy. Get Paul out of here! Look at my fingers, somebody. I am trying to bend them. Bend, damn you, bend! If I could only open my eyes and look at my hands. Are my fingers bending, Nurse?

"Nurse, I'll be right back. I have to get some things from my car."

If the police check my car? No, what could they find? Would the tracks show Paul drove the car right to the cliff and jumped before I knew what was happening? I was daydreaming, half asleep.

"You're sleeping, poor dear, if you can call it sleep. You won't miss me, that's for sure. I'll just go to the bathroom while the doctor's gone."

The doctor's gone to his car! You can't leave me alone, Nurse. Nurse! Oh, why can't you hear me? Listen to me. I'm not sleeping. I can hear. That's the bathroom door closing. And that . . . that's the hall door opening. What's that sound? Oh my God, it's . . . it's the thumping! Not the pillow! No! Paul! Aaaahh . . .

11 murders by the cream of crime writers $1.

Gardner

1. The Case of the Postponed Murder by Erle Stanley Gardner. The brand new Perry Mason finds Perry defending a woman who was "caught in the act" of murder. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

2. The Case of the Fenced-In Woman by Erle Stanley Gardner. A marriage on the rocks and a house divided by a barbed wire fence add up to the strangest Mason mystery ever. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Christie

3. Nemesis by Agatha Christie. Miss Marple gets a letter from a dead man—asking her to investigate a forgotten crime. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

4. Hallowe'en Party by Agatha Christie. A child drowns after boasting of seeing a murder. And a town explodes under Hercule Poirot's probing. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Queen

5. A Fine and Private Place by Ellery Queen. The clues point to the victim's young wife, or do they? (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Foley

6. The First Mrs. Winston by Rae Foley. Was she shot by the virginal farm-girl who had just become the second Mrs. Winston? (Publ. Ed. $4.95)

Marric

7. Gideon's Press by J. J. Marric. Gideon of Scotland Yard against fanatics who are trying to overthrow the government by assorted acts of violence. (Publ. Ed. $4.95)

Creasey

8. Inspector West At Home by John Creasey. Who framed "Handsome" West on a dope rap, got him suspended from Scotland Yard? (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

MacDonald

9. A Deadly Shade of Gold by John D. MacDonald. A friend's suspicious death and a missing golden idol launch Travis McGee on another breathtaking international caper. (Publ. Ed. $7.50)

Eberhart

10. Danger Money by Mignon G. Eberhart. Half in love with her boss, the heroine is in danger when his wife is murdered. 49th and latest thriller by the "Queen" of suspense. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Simenon

11. Maigret and the Millionaires by Georges Simenon. Murder in a bathtub leads Maigret from his usual underworld haunts to the unfamiliar territory of swank Paris hotels and their VIP clientele. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

The Detective Book Club,
Roslyn, New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send at once the 4 double-volumes and 1 triple-volume shown on the other side, containing 11 mysteries. I enclose *no money now*. I may examine my introductory books for one week, then will either accept all 5 volumes for the special new-member price of only $1 (plus postage and handling) or return them and owe nothing. As a member, I will receive free the Club's monthly *Preview* which describes my next selections, but I am not obligated to accept them; I will always have at least 10 days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book at the Club's expense for full credit. For each monthly 3-in-1 selection I keep, I will send you only $3.89 (plus postage and handling). I may cancel my membership at any time.

(Books shipped in U.S.A. and Canada only.)

5-XX

Ms. / Mr. _____
(Please print plainly)

Address _____

43-5A

City, State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Ontario; offer slightly different in Canada.

(See other side for further details.)

For $1, you get 4 thrillers by the "King and Queen" of mystery: Erle Stanley Gardner and Agatha Christie. Plus the latest adventures of Travis McGee and Inspector Maigret. Plus 5 more including a brand-new Mignon Eberhart whodunit.

These 11 mysteries in the publishers' original editions cost $65.00. But you get *all 11,* full-length and handsomely hardbound, for only $1, as long as the supply lasts.

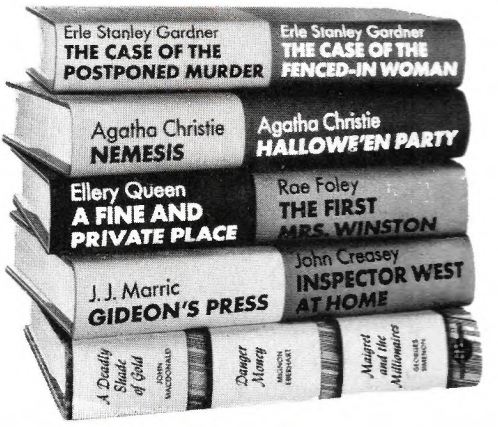
What's the catch? You are. Only when you become a member, can we prove to you that The Detective Book Club gives more and asks less of you than any other club. Hence, the irresistible offer.

You pay no membership fee. There is no minimum number of books you must buy. You get free the Club's *Preview* which describes each month's selections. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it. And you may cancel at any time.

When you do accept a Club selection, you get three complete, uncondensed detective novels in one handsome, hardbound volume (like the one shown on this page) for only $3.89. That's *less* than you'd have to pay for any *one* of these novels in its trade edition.

The Club's editors select from more than 300 mystery books published each year. Their choices are so outstanding that many mystery writers are members, too. As a member, you'll be offered thrillers by top names like those featured above — plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis, Ngaio Marsh, Donald Westlake and others.

Send the postpaid card today to get your 11 mysteries for $1.



11 mysteries for $1, including 4 by Gardner and Christie, plus the latest Eberhart and MacDonald thrillers.

First Class
Permit No. 7
Roslyn, N.Y.

Business Reply Mail
No postage stamp necessary
if mailed in the United States

Postage Will Be Paid By

The Detective Book Club
Roslyn, New York 11576

(See other side for further details.)